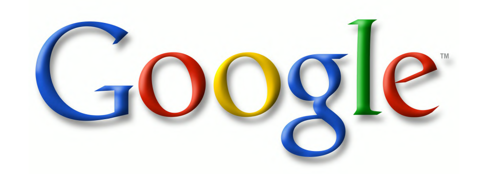
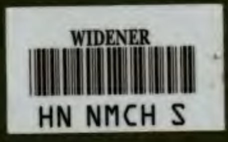




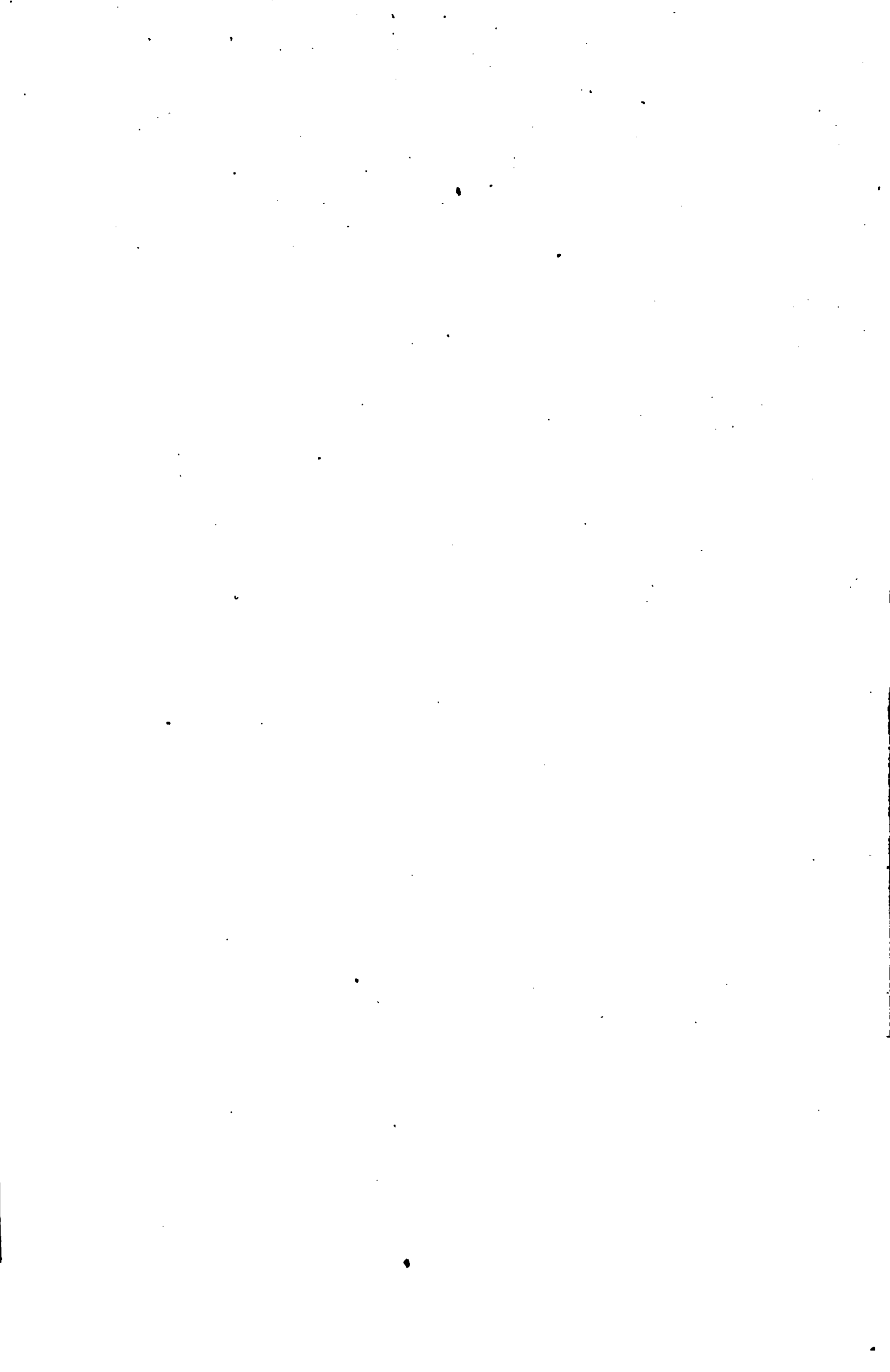
THE GUILD LIBRARY

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

BY PROFESSOR WM L. DAVIDSON M.A. LL.D







THE GUILD LIBRARY

"All the manuals are fine examples of careful workmanship and scholarly industry."—"Independent and Nonconformist," 17th August 1896.

"A series of which we have often spoken in terms of very high commendation."—"Record," 11th March 1898.

"A most admirable series."—"Methodist Times," 25th August 1898.

"No more beautiful series of the kind passes under our notice."—"Literary World," 21st October 1898.

LONDON: A. & C. BLACK.
EDINBURGH: R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED.

Edited by Very Rev. Prof. CHARTERIS, D.D., Edinburgh, and Rev. J. A. M'CLYMONT, D.D., Aberdeen.

Crown 8vo Edition, Price 1s. 6d. net. Copies may be had interleaved for 8d. extra.

Now Ready.

HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

By Professor DAVIDSON, LL.D., University of Aberdeen.

FIRST SERIES.

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD.

By Principal GRANT, D.D., LL.D., Queen's University, Canada.

23rd Thousand.

"Have seldom seen a better and clearer text-book."—*British Weekly.*

HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

By Principal STEWART, D.D., University of St. Andrews.

23rd Thousand.

"For its own purpose there is no book that can for a moment compete with it."—*Expository Times.*

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS WRITERS.

By Rev. J. A. M'CLYMONT, D.D., Aberdeen.

32nd Thousand.

"It supplies excellently terse and clear introductions to the books of the New Testament."—*Guardian.*

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS CONTENTS.

By Professor ROBERTSON, D.D., University of Glasgow.

22nd Thousand.

"It contains the pith of libraries, and presents its massive learning in a lucid and readable style."—*Evangelical Magazine.*

THE GUILD LIBRARY

LANDMARKS OF CHURCH HISTORY.

By Professor COWAN, D.D., University of Aberdeen.

17th Thousand.

"Dr. Cowan has chosen his materials judiciously, and set them forth lucidly and attractively."—*Glasgow Herald.*

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

By Rev. P. M'ADAM MUIR, D.D., Glasgow.

22nd Thousand.

"This comprehensive, luminous, and interesting picture of the ecclesiastical past and present of Scotland."—*Literary World.*

OUR LORD'S TEACHING.

By Rev. J. ROBERTSON, D.D., Whittingehame.

22nd Thousand.

"As long as the Church of Scotland can produce manuals of this calibre it need not fear comparison with any community in Christendom."—*Record.*

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES.

By Rev. J. N. OGILVIE, M.A., Bangalore.

7th Thousand.

"Nowhere is it possible to obtain in anything like the same compass so clear and authoritative an array of historical facts and ecclesiastical statistics, and the volume has the additional advantage of being bright and readable."—*Speaker.*

SECOND SERIES.

A FAITHFUL CHURCHMAN.

Sketch of the Life and Work of Professor JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D., Founder of the Endowment Scheme of the Church of Scotland.

By Prof. CHARTERIS, D.D., University of Edinburgh.

"If any young novelist wishes to tell again the ever-romantic story of the struggles of a poor Scottish student, described so pathetically by George MacDonald and by still more popular successors, he will find some valuable material in a little book issued in the Guild Library this week entitled 'A Faithful Churchman.'"—*Aberdeen Free Press.*

"The book can be recommended to young Churchmen of all denominations, and will make them acquainted not only with a fine and characteristic type of Scotsman, but also with events and movements which are passing out of mind, but which have done much to mould the present."—*Glasgow Herald.*

"Dr. Charteris has performed his task admirably."—*Sheffield Independent.*

GUILD TEXT-BOOKS

Price 6d. net.

LONDON: A. & C. BLACK.
EDINBURGH: R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED.

Edited by Very Rev. Prof. CHARTERIS, D.D., Edinburgh, and Rev. J. A. M'CLYMONT, D.D., Aberdeen.

All the volumes in the First Series of the GUILD LIBRARY are also to be had in the Sixpenny form with reduced contents.

Now Ready.

CHURCH, MINISTRY, AND SACRAMENTS.

By Rev. NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D., Inverness.

"The subject is handled with great good sense and in a liberal spirit."—*Critical Review.*

"The book may be safely recommended as a safe guide along a thorny but important path of study."—*Scotsman.*

"A model of what such a text-book should be."—*Glasgow Herald.*

"Dr. Macleod writes with full knowledge, and has furnished an excellent handbook on the important subjects with which he deals."—*North British Daily Mail.*

"No handbook could be more timely, and none could be better adapted to its purpose."—*Methodist Times.*

Already Published.

LIFE AND CONDUCT.

By Very Rev. J. CAMERON LEES, D.D., LL.D., Dean of the Chapel Royal of Scotland.

25*th Thousand.*

"An excellent manual of instruction."—*Religious Review of Reviews.*

"Written in an unusually bright lively manner."—*Manchester Guardian.*

EXPOSITION OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

By Rev. J. DODDS, D.D., Corstorphine.

10*th Thousand.*

"This is an excellent little volume, and from its conciseness, clearness, and comprehensiveness is a great improvement on the well-known 'Pearson' of an earlier generation."—*Aberdeen Journal.*

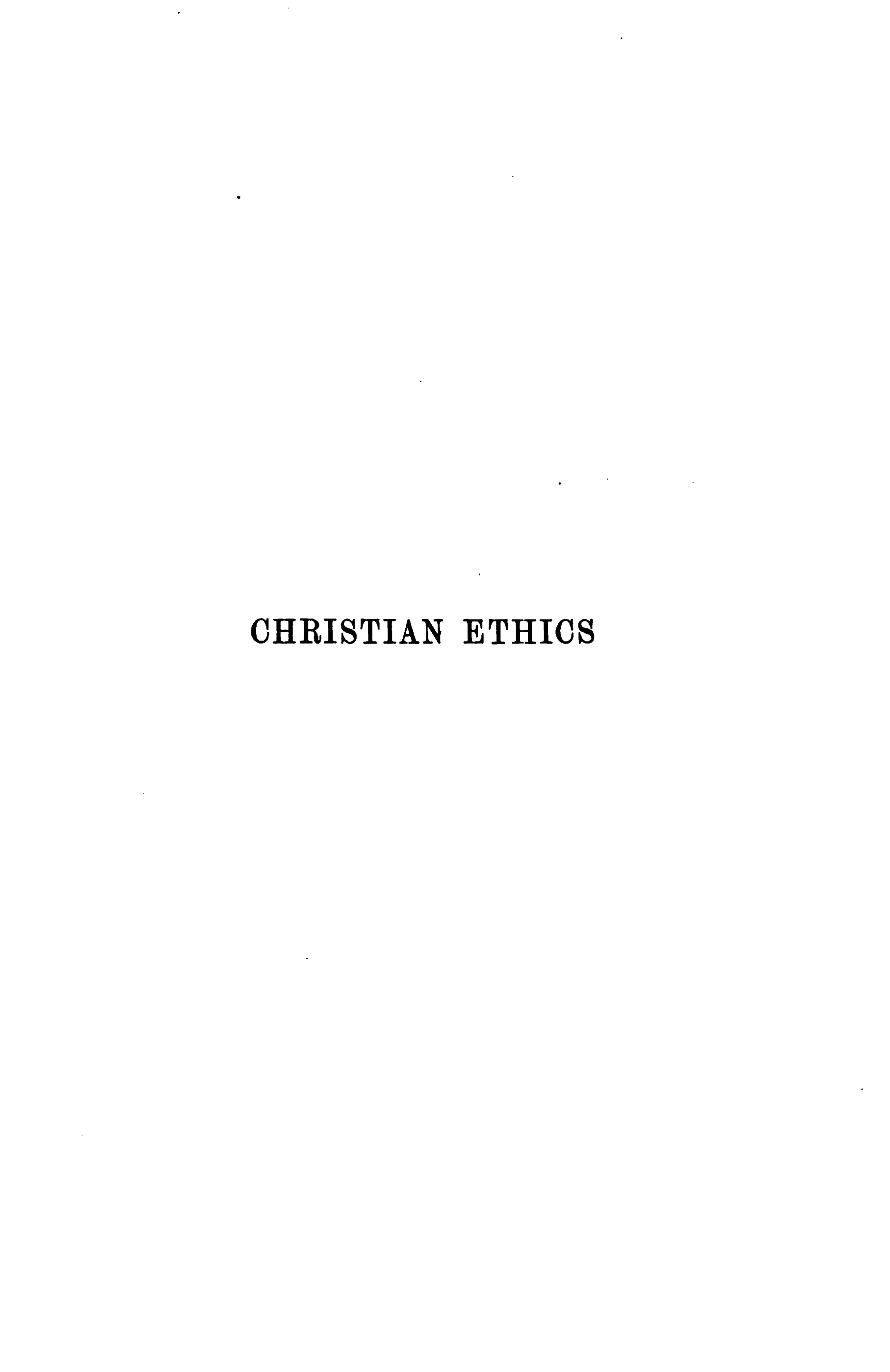
HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

By Rev. GEORGE MILLIGAN, B.D., Caputh.

10*th Thousand.*

"This book is like a fine sermon following a beautiful text."—*Expository Times.*

"When we say that it is worthy of its position in such a series we know of no higher praise we can give."—*Methodist N. C. Magazine.*



CHRISTIAN ETHICS



CHRISTIAN ETHICS

BY

WILLIAM L. DAVIDSON, M.A., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

AUTHOR OF

'THE LOGIC OF DEFINITION,' 'THEISM AND HUMAN NATURE,' ETC.

LONDON: A. & C. BLACK, SOHO SQUARE

EDINBURGH: R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED

PUBLICATION AGENTS FOR THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

1899

'Vertue is like a Rich Stone, best plaine set."

BACON.

PREFATORY NOTE

THE difficulty of compressing Christian Ethics into a few pages will be duly appreciated only by those who are acquainted with the subject. There are, also, many pitfalls of treatment, which prove disastrous to the unwary. Two of them, at any rate, I have tried to avoid,—*viz.*, (1) swamping Christian Ethics in Christian Theology, and (2) separating the two provinces so absolutely as to convey the impression that they have no relation to each other. I have, further, endeavoured to respect the sense of proportion in the topics handled. Beyond this, I need make no explanation. The little treatise must explain itself.

My hearty thanks are due to Professor Charteris, D.D., to Dr. M'Clymont, and to my assistant in logic, Mr. Robert S. Rait, New College, Oxford, for valued help in the revision of the proof-sheets.

WILLIAM L. DAVIDSON.

THE UNIVERSITY, ABERDEEN,
February 1899.

CONTENTS

SECTION A—THE SUBJECT DEFINED

SECTION B—THE HIGHEST GOOD

SECTION C—CHARACTER AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

SECTION D—PRACTICAL ETHICS

SECTION E—THE MYSTERY OF EVIL

SECTION A

THE SUBJECT DEFINED

CHAPTER I

MEANING OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

I. Ethics in general — It treats of what *should* be—Its twofold aspect: theoretical and practical — II. Christian ethics in special — It presupposes general ethics—Its relation to Jewish ethics—Its *distinctive* features—1. It emphasizes the worth and dignity of the individual: this refers to the body as well as to the soul—2. Ethical progress through conflict—Battle of the two selves—3. It transforms general ethical doctrine—Its conception of virtue — Exalts the gentle and amiable virtues — Quickens practical morality — Intensifies and illumines ethical principles—Examples, with special reference to Stoicism—4. It regards self-sacrifice and unselfishness as the essence of virtue—What is meant by "enthusiasm of humanity"—Conception of the Christian Church, or Kingdom of Christ—Practical results of universal brotherhood—5. It makes its ethical teaching centre in the person of the Great Teacher Himself—6. It throws light on the problem of evil in the world—Christianity necessarily bright and hopeful, and why.

I. Ethics in General

ETHICS, speaking broadly, is the science of morals, or the systematic study and exposition of human character and

human conduct. It is based specifically on the fact that man is not only a sensitive being (*i.e.*, possessed of feeling), and an intellectual being (*i.e.*, capable of knowing), but also a volitional being (*i.e.*, possessing will or self-determining activity) — a **person** claiming rights, but living also under obligations and having duties to perform,—responsible, therefore, for his intentions, dispositions, and actions. This idea of responsibility carries in it the further ideas of a rule or law to which he is to conform and an ideal at which he is to aim. Consequently, Ethics is concerned, not simply with what a man **is** and what a man **does**, but, more particularly, with what a man **should** be, and what he **should** do. It recognizes a standard of right and wrong, according to which the individual is to test his life; and a highest or perfect type of being, at which he is continually to aim.

Accordingly, Ethics has both a theoretical and a practical interest. On its theoretical side, it analyzes our moral ideas (right, wrong, duty, etc.), and considers their origin; it faces and tries to determine such questions as the freedom of the will, the significance and place of conscience in man's constitution, the meaning and working of moral judgment, the law of habit and the formation of character, the conception and definition of the ultimate ethical end; and it pushes up ethical inquiry into the region of metaphysics—where, in especial, the problems of God, the human Soul, and Moral Evil fall to be considered. On its practical side, it classifies and expounds the various duties—duties to oneself (prudence, temperance, etc.); duties to others (to one's fellow-men, arising from kinship and social relations, and to the lower animals); duties to God (manifested in obedience and the various offices of piety)[1]; and it con-

[1] One of the earliest classifications of duties was the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, written on two Tables of Stone, *five* on each

cerns itself also, in some measure, with casuistry—which is that branch of moral science that deals with cases of conscience, and aims at helping the hesitating and perplexed to a decision when the application of general rules to particular cases is unusually difficult, when diverse duties conflict and the way of action is not clear.

II. Christian Ethics in Special

Now, the conceptions and principles of general ethics are presupposed in Christian Ethics. Hence, there is no need, when we come to treat of the morality of Christianity, to argue abstract questions about the existence and authority of conscience, the nature of right and wrong, the freedom of the will, and such like. All these—the existence and authority of conscience, the distinction between right and wrong, the will's freedom—are simply taken for granted. Nor is there need to analyze anew the recognized ethical duties—such as prudence, temperance, courage, patriotism, truthfulness, honesty, gratitude, justice, piety, devotion. Those, too, are regarded as given. Nor even need the Mosaic Decalogue be re-enacted. It is assumed in Christianity, as it was declared in the Hebrew Scriptures, that "the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments."[1] "Think not," said Jesus, "that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil" (St. Matt. v. 17); though, in fulfilling, He gave them a deeper and more spiritual interpretation. The relation of Christian to Jewish ethics is highly important and

table; concerned respectively with duties to God and duties to man. This was the proper Jewish arrangement; for, the fifth commandment, dealing with the honouring of one's parents, was regarded as a duty o piety, and, therefore, to be placed alongside the other duties to God, the duties to man beginning only with the sixth commandment.

[1] *The Shorter Catechism*, question 41.

must be borne constantly in mind. So far as the **spirit** of the Old Testament is concerned, Christ fully accepted it, and carried forward the truth into His own dispensation; but, so far as regards the **letter**, He is frequently against it. His great principle, for instance, regarding the Sabbath was, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"; and on this He based the claim "that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (St. Mark ii. 27, 28). In particular, His ethical teaching is directly opposed to what had come to be the mere formalism of the Scribes and Pharisees of His time, and to "the tradition of the elders," which had supplanted righteousness by mere outward ceremony. With the Scribes and Pharisees, it was perpetually, "Tithe, tithe," "pay, pay," even of garden herbs, "mint, anise, cummin" (St. Matt. xxiii. 23), till the Law had become, what St. Peter declared it to be, "a yoke . . . which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10); and the mode of reasoning whereby they rid themselves of plain obligations — as seen, for instance, in the doctrine of Corban (St. Mark vii. 9-16)—was so utterly perverted, and their interpretations of unpleasant injunctions of the Law so full of quibbling (see St. Matt. xxiii. 16-22), that Jesus had only scathing words of scorn and condemnation for them. In defending injustices and tampering with conscience, they had parted with the truth, ignoring "the weightier matters of the law— judgment, and mercy, and faith." They had become "blind guides," "straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel" (St. Matt. xxiii. 23, 24).

What, then, is distinctive of **Christian** moral teaching? The following points may form a convenient summary of the characteristics.

1. First of all, Christianity is distinguished by its

emphatic assertion of the worth and dignity of the **individual** human being.

The New Testament does not, like ancient Greek philosophies, conceive the State as everything and the individual as practically nothing. The individual has his own independent rights and value: he is, as the Old Testament had long ago declared, a creature made "in the image of God" (Genesis i. 27); and this Divine affinity is all-important. Hence the meaning of the work of redemption wrought out by Christ—at the basis of which lies appreciation of the inestimable worth of the individual, most vividly expressed in such passages of Scripture as the parables of the "lost sheep," the "lost coin," and the "prodigal son" (St. Luke xv.). Nor is man's greatness confined to his soul: it extends also to his body. The Incarnation proves this ("The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," St. John i. 14); but it is proved also by the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and by the doctrine of Resurrection, particularly as taught by St. Paul. If our bodies are fit for being "temples of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinth. vi. 19), if "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinth. xv. 53), if "the body of our humiliation" must be conformed to "the body of His [Christ's] glory" (Philip. iii. 21); then the body cannot be, as Plato sometimes declared it, simply "the prison-house" of the soul—a clog and hindrance to its higher life and development:[1] it must be the soul's helpmeet,

[1] In the *Phædrus*, the soul is represented by Plato as "fettered to the body like an oyster to its shell"; and, in the *Republic*, it is likened, because of its disfigurement through the earthy and sensuous, to the sea-god Glaucus, who is transformed almost past recognition by the shell-fish, seaweed, and other marine growths, that have attached themselves to him. The classical passage in the *Phædo* is that in which Socrates defends the willingness of the philosopher to die, (1) on the ground that he views death simply as the separation of soul and body, and (2) by consideration of the philosopher's great aim in life,

and an aid towards its progress and perfection. We have here advanced to a conception even beyond that of **Genesis**; for, that Scripture, though recognizing that the body is God's workmanship, yet could scarcely rise above the thought that it is merely "dust of the ground" (Genesis ii. 7).

This central doctrine of the eternal worth and dignity of the individual man has far-reaching ethical consequences.

2. Connected with this is a second peculiarity,—*viz.*, Christianity's insistence on the method of the soul's ethical **progress through conflict and self-renunciation.** The Christian is, above all, to be a moral hero: he is to "endure hardness," he is to "fight the good fight," he is to "overcome."

That there is in the breast of each man a double self, a higher and a lower, "flesh" and "spirit," one naturally inclining to the animal side of his being and the other attaching to the rational side, and that progress in righteousness consists in subordinating the first, and, where need is (namely, when it would usurp supremacy), in "crucifying" it,—is the teaching insisted on both by Christ and by His Apostles. St. Paul is very clear on the point in all his epistles—particularly in *Romans*, *Galatians*, and *Colossians*. But Jesus Himself had said, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me," and then, going on, had authoritatively declared, "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it" (St. Matt. xvi. 24, 25).

—*viz.*, to be freed, as much as may be, from connexion with the body, seeing that the body, being a clog to the soul, obstructs its acquisition of the four cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance), and renders us oblivious of the fact that only when separated from the body can the soul reach its highest energy and insight.

Through Christianity, it has now become a commonplace of the moralist, the preacher, and the poet alike:—

> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.[1]

3. I have just said that Christianity has no breach with general ethics, but, on the contrary, takes over ethical conceptions and principles and weaves them into its own system. "Whatsoever things are true," it says, "whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philip. iv. 8). Nevertheless, the notions and principles, when taken over, do not remain what they were before: at all events, **they acquire a new life and fresh power,** if not also **a new interpretation.**

This is very obvious in the case of the ethical virtues. These are reproduced by Christianity; but, in the process, they are raised from virtues into divine graces, and Duty—which, to the moralist, is always more or less associated with *feeling of constraint*—is transformed into *love.* We live now on a higher plane; attachment to the Master, who is Himself the Embodiment and Source of Virtue, making all the difference. This is the same thing as saying that Christian Ethics cannot be separated from the Christian Religion. Hence, even the ethical vocabulary, to some extent, becomes changed. "Virtue," for example, is not a term often found in the New Testament: "righteousness," a word of deeper or more spiritual import, is used instead. "Happiness," again, is supplanted by "blessedness," and "evil" by "sin." The religious interpretation of our

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, i.

ethical experiences—the view of them as facing the divine and the spiritual—has necessitated the change.

In like manner, a group of ethical qualities that ancient morality despised and relegated to an inferior position, has been raised to the first rank. I refer to the gentle and amiable virtues—humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and the like. These were excellences on which no ancient Greek laid much stress. On the contrary, they were all associated in the Greek mind with weakness, timidity, and lack of self-respect. To pass by an insult, to be long-suffering to an offender, to forgive one's enemies, to return good for evil, was the last thing that pagan antiquity would have deemed worthy of a free man. Even the Jew could go no farther than "breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Levit. xxiv. 20). The transformation came only with the revelation of God as **Father**—only when the essence of the Divine nature was shown by Christ to be Love, and the supreme attribute of the Divinity to be mercy or forgiveness.

So, also, practical morality in all its parts is vivified by the Christian application of it: it is made to live and glow. This may be distinctly seen by a reference to St. Paul's moral injunctions in Romans xii. and xiii., or to St. James's General Epistle, or to 1 Peter, chapters ii. and iii.

Still further, leading ethical principles, as well as ethical notions, become intensified, quickened, and illuminated when accepted by Christ. Take, for instance, the old stoical doctrine of the *inwardness* of morality—of the need there is, if we would judge character aright, of gauging men's actions, not simply in their outward manifestation, in the spoken word or the visible deed, but, above all, in the inward motive that prompted them, in the thought and in the heart of the doer. Or take, again,

that other great stoical doctrine of the propriety of a man's setting his affection, not on the external and evanescent (wealth, fame, possessions, etc.), but on "things within his own power,"—on spiritual, not on earthly, treasures.[1] We know what these principles became in the teaching of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount is one long exposition of them; and the vitality and living power imparted to them, through their religious setting, is felt at every turn of the discourse.

4. Not less remarkable, fourthly, is the place assigned by Christianity to **self-sacrifice and unselfishness** as the essence of virtue.

The individual, we have seen, has independent worth as a being formed in the image of God. But this worth is to be realized through, and manifested in, unselfish service of others. The supreme good is attainable, not if sought as an exclusive personal possession, but only as something in which others may share as well as the individual —in other words, the individual's welfare is bound up in the welfare of his fellow-men, and the highest life that he can live is one of going about doing good.

This "enthusiasm of humanity" (as it has been called[2]) was the characteristic of Christ Himself; and it is required to be prominent in His disciples. It is more than benevolence or good-will towards others — it is benevolence issuing in active beneficence; it is a settled disposition of charity and philanthropy, grounded on the

[1] These doctrines of the Stoics are found best expressed in the *Dissertations* and *Encheiridion* or *Handbook* of Epictetus, satisfactorily translated into English by G. Long (London, George Bell and Sons). Of the *Encheiridion*, Dean Farrar says: "No systematic treatise of morals so simply beautiful was ever composed, and to this day the best Christian may study it, not with interest only, but with real advantage. It is like the voice of the Sybil, which, uttering things simple, and unperfumed, and unadorned, by God's grace reacheth through innumerable years" (*Seekers after God*, p. 222).

[2] See *Ecce Homo*.

principle that "God made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts xvii. 26), and that the Church of Christ, or more exactly, His Kingdom, is an **organic** unity—a unity in which the units are not mere parts of a whole, each in outward contact or connexion with the rest, but members of a body, each in living union with the others, not one of which can say to its neighbour, "I have no need of thee."

The practical results of the acceptance of this doctrine of the Universal Brotherhood of mankind, or, as it has been designated, the solidarity of the race, have been an intense scorn of hypocrisy and of all that would undermine mutual confidence and trust among men, abhorrence of selfishness in all its forms, a true appreciation of the place and rights of woman in society (an appreciation that was miserably wanting in even the highest of ancient ethical systems), and an unqualified condemnation of slavery.

5. Again, it is a peculiarity of Christianity, and the great source of its quickening power, that it does not separate its ethical teaching from the person of the Great Teacher Himself. On the contrary, the supreme **motive** to right living is uniformly represented, in the New Testament, as being **love for Christ.** As Christ's life on earth is given us as our example, so a regard to His will or a desire to please Him, is set forth as the actuating spring of the Christian's conduct. He is the source of ethical inspiration, as He is also the perfect embodiment of ethical character. The Revealer cannot be separated from His revelation, the Master from His doctrine; and acceptance of the one means devotion to the other also.

6. Finally, Christianity has thrown **special light on the problem of evil in the world**: it has explained, as was never done before, the true meaning of pain and suffering; and, "bringing life and immortality to

light through the Gospel," it has saved men from a despairing view of things. Christianity is necessarily optimistic, — necessarily bright and hopeful. Without painting the present life in too roseate colours, without denying or even attempting to minimize the hardness of the struggle for existence here, yea, while persistently representing man's life on earth as one long-continued strife or struggle—a battle with adverse external circumstances, a conflict, even fiercer, with opposing forces in the heart,—it justifies existence by revealing the true meaning and source of happiness, by disclosing the remedy for sin and the means of removing unrest, and by making clear the goal towards which all things are tending and how the end is to be reached. Both the words and the work of Christ give a power to faith and a stimulus to hope that make life's evils, not only endurable, but helpful; and, although the Scripture Eschatology (*i.e.*, teaching about Last Things), more especially its representation of the Day of Judgment and the future punishment of sin, has in it a disturbing element of terror, nevertheless the pictures of future bliss that we find in Scripture and the assurance (based on Jesus' Resurrection) that ultimately Death shall be "swallowed up in victory" and God shall be "all in all," react upon our present experiences and show us the real value of the present life and make us to feel that it is indeed worth living.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINALITY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Ethics of the Sermon on the Mount—Parallels from Greek and other pagan writings—What is meant by *originality* of Christian Ethics—Christ's relation to truth—In the past and now—The Beatitudes—Illustrations—(1) "Blessed are the meek"—The Old Testament counterpart—Jesus' distinctive interpretation—(2) "Blessed are the merciful"—(*a*) Mercy as forgiveness of debts—How the Jews understood this—Exemplified in usury—How Jesus understands it—The *spirit* of the Christian in this connexion—Contrast with that of the king's servant, in the parable—(*b*) Mercy as compassion—In the Mosaic Law—Examples—How restricted—Compassion, to Jesus, quite different—Christ's style or manner of teaching—(*a*) Pictorial or by parables, and (*b*) paradoxical—Advantage of enunciating *principles*, and not merely laying down *rules*.

It has just been said that the ethics of Christianity is, in large part, a reproduction of ethics in general, and has the closest relation to Jewish ethics in particular. The truth of this statement will be best appreciated, if we turn to the Sermon on the Mount (St. Matt. v.-vii.), which is the Saviour's fullest exposition of the laws of His Kingdom.

It would not be difficult to find parallels from Plato or other Greek writers for the most striking of the precepts and sayings of that memorable discourse. Even the Golden Rule itself, "All things whatsoever ye would

that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (vii. 12), was, in a manner, anticipated by Isocrates in the sentence, "Whatsoever things make you wroth when others do them to you, take care not to do the same to others." Parallels, also, are abundant in the great ethical systems of heathen lands other than Greece—in Buddha's deliverances in India, for instance, or the moral code of Confucius in China. Equally easy would it be to find traces of Old Testament influence in Jesus' teaching—as, for instance, in the Beatitudes or Blessings.

Now, in view of these facts, people of a prosaic mind have sometimes been troubled about the **originality** of the Christian Ethics. They have been pained to think that Jesus in His most famous utterances should have been in any way anticipated by pagan philosopher, or by ancient prophet or psalmist, or, it may be, by Jewish doctor. That has seemed to them to detract from His greatness. They would have Him speak only words that no human being ever used before, or give expression only to such truths as had never yet entered into man's mind or found definite embodiment in his speech.

Surely, such a notion is unreasonable! Had Christ come bearing no relation to the highest wisdom of the pagan world (Greek or Hindu), or no relation to the Hebrew Scriptures, or making no reference to the deep spiritual truths of olden times, He would, in the first place, have had nothing to appeal to in His hearers, and His teaching must of necessity have fallen ineffectual; but, in the second place, He would have virtually disowned the light that was in the heathen sages, and have ignored the Old Testament as the special preparer of His own way, as well as His own past office as "the Light of the World" (St. John i. 9; viii. 12), as the guide and inspirer of law-giver and prophet alike, and the motive power of a progressive revelation which was to find its completion

in Himself. True originality does not lie in the uttering of absolutely new truths; nor does it lie in having no connexion with the past. The greatest geniuses that the world has ever known have drawn upon the work and wisdom of their predecessors to a vast extent; but they have repaid the loan with interest. Shakespeare borrows the plots of many of his plays from others: he borrows even the characters, and, sometimes, the very words. But, in taking, he transforms. At the touch of genius, the old becomes a new creation; and words and phrases and characters and plot and all are seen in an entirely fresh light, and yield up their true meaning for the first time.

So with Jesus and His ethical teaching. In the Beatitudes, for example, He works with old materials. His thought is cast in Jewish moulds, and His phraseology is that of the Old Testament. But an utter transformation passes on the doctrines. Divine genius alone (if we may reverently phrase it so) could have selected, out of the enormous mass of Old Testament precepts, overlaid with Rabbinical commentary and buried under the glosses of the scribes, precisely those truths that had the highest life-giving power in them, and put them in a setting which should attract the attention of mankind and rivet their affection. The originality lies in the new and permanent force now imparted to them; in the breadth and depth of the application given to them; and in their being accepted as the laws of the Christian Kingdom, deriving their influence from their being associated with the Saviour-King Himself — centring in and flowing from His own winning personality. As thus uttered, they became a new and living power in the world; and the early hearers felt it. For, "when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught

them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (St. Matt. vii. 28, 29).

The meaning of this will be sufficiently illustrated by taking **two of the Beatitudes**.

(1) "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (v. 5).

That is virtually a quotation from the Old Testament. It is a sentence taken, with little outward alteration, from the 37th Psalm (verse 9). Yet, how different the spirit of the two! By "the meek" the psalmist understood strict, formally religious, Jews, — children of Abraham, who were faithfully conforming to the Law and ordinances of Moses. They were "the righteous," as contrasted with their heathen masters and oppressors, designated "the wicked." It was not character, so much as privilege, that made the difference. On the one side were "the chosen people," "children of election"; on the other side were "aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the Covenants of Promise" (Eph. ii. 12). Yet, those aliens and strangers had gained the mastery, and taken possession of the Holy Land. But the faithful Jew would not despond. He could not believe that God's special heritage would be given over finally, or "the blessed of the Lord" be put permanently to shame. Nay, the past history of Israel gave him ground for hope; and, as he thought of former oppressions and how God had put an end to them, he saw with the eye of faith the successful termination of present difficulties and the restoration of peace and liberty—he saw the enemy cast forth, and "the wicked cut off," and prosperity and joy brought back in plenty. It was the return of national independence, for which the post-exilic Jews so eagerly longed. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider

his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit **the land.**"

But, to Jesus, "the meek" meant something other than privileged Jews and ardent patriots; and "the land" He thought of as an inheritance for them was more than Palestine. Character, not privilege, was what He looked to. He had before Him, in His mind, a certain type of character, not a mere privileged class of beings; and, as He reflected on the inestimable value to the world of this particular type of character and of the power it had to ennoble and cement mankind, He attached to it a blessing, and made to it a liberal promise. "Blessed are the meek," He said, "for they shall inherit **the earth.**"

(2) In like manner, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (v. 7).

In this, we seem to find an echo of such a passage as the opening of the 41st Psalm: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." But, though the idea in both be very much the same, the interpretation of it by Christ discloses an entirely new significance.

(*a*) The first meaning of Mercy is **forgiveness of debts,** cancelling what is due to us. It is the opposite of insisting rigorously, and without regard to circumstances, on our rights. It attaches itself to the generous side of our nature, and refuses to adhere strictly to the bond, to insist on the actual pound of flesh or to exact the uttermost farthing.

In this sense, Mercy was certainly recognized by the ancient Jew and inwoven into the Mosaic legislation. Usury, for instance, was strictly condemned; and it was a great breach of national righteousness to grind the faces of the poor. But, then, all this applied to the relations of Jew to Jew: it did not contemplate the

Jew's relation to the foreigner or Gentile (see Deuteronomy xxiii. 19, 20). Hence, among non-Jewish peoples, the Jews have had, for many centuries, the unenviable notoriety of being a race of money-lenders—exorbitant in their usury and relentless in exacting it. Their humanity in this respect has not extended beyond their dealings with themselves: it has stopped precisely at the point where family-relationship stopped.

So with other kinds of debts. Whatever liberality the Jewish Law inculcated, it was not as between man and man, but, for the most part, as between Jew and Jew.[1] And, even then, the injunction was very limited. The fundamental principle, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," would have been of no avail, if the exceptions had been more numerous than the rule.

Now, Jesus' maxim enjoining Mercy is immeasurably more liberal than this. It extends to **all** men—of whatever race or age or religion; and it includes every class of men's debts. It draws no distinction, for the purpose in hand, between the Christian and the non-Christian; but it requires that the Christian shall look upon men everywhere as brothers, and shall be ready to deal in the spirit of charity and forgiveness with strangers and enemies as with friends and fellow-workers "of the household of faith." And it does not restrict debts to mere money loans or to material obligations. "Debts," to the Christian, means not only money due to him, but also wrongs done to him, injuries intentionally inflicted on him, injustices committed against him. He is my debtor who tries to spoil my character, or to rob me of my good name, as much as, or even more than, he who borrows money from me or takes my goods on loan.

[1] The partial exception was "thy stranger that is within thy gates."

Then, the spirit of the Christian towards all such debtors is to be one of **readiness to pardon.** I am not required by Christ to remit every debt that is due to me, or to ignore every insult that is offered me. On the contrary, Jesus' precept enforcing universal mercy, just because it is a precept, and not a mere cast-iron rule, demands discretion in the application of it. To allow people to presume upon my goodness and to inflict all kinds of injuries upon me without any protest or even resentment on my part, would not only be itself wrong, it would be the most demoralizing thing imaginable for the people themselves. If Christianity meant that, it would be a curse, and not a blessing, to the world. But what Christ means is, that His followers shall act in no selfish manner, but as men who fully realize that they are bound to their fellow-men by no mere mechanical ties but by the closest bonds of blood-relationship and mutual dependence. As they pray to God to be forgiven, so they must themselves forgive: "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12). Not in the spirit of the king's servant (St. Matt. xviii. 23-35), who, though himself released from the debt of 10,000 talents, took his fellow-servant (who owed him only "an hundred pence") by the throat, "saying, Pay me that thou owest," and, when the fellow-servant could not, but begged, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all," went and cast him into prison,—not in such a spirit as that, but in the spirit of the pardoned penitent, who knows the meaning of "Freely ye have received, freely give," are they to live and act, imitating their Lord Himself, and ever listening to the prayer, "Have patience with me." "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (St. Matt. vi. 14, 15).

(*b*) But Mercy has another meaning. It signifies, not only forgiveness of debts, but also **pity or compassion.**

In this sense, it was well known to the Jews. There are many forms of humanity distinctly specified in the Mosaic Law; and many of the old Hebrew institutions had humane feeling as their basis. I need not dwell upon the enactments relating to the shedding of blood and the appointment of Cities of Refuge for the man-slayer (see Num. xxxv.). I need do no more than mention the kindly treatment accorded to strangers, widows, and orphans (Exodus xxii. 21-24; Deut. xiv. 29, etc.). But, perhaps, the most conspicuous instance is the Poor. Not only were the gleanings of the fields—grain-fields, vineyards, and oliveyards (Levit. xix. 9, 10; Deut. xxiv. 19-22, etc.)—set apart for the poor, but strict punishment was ordained for those who should oppress their needy brother, while the blessing was attached to the compassionate and kind. "He that hath pity upon the poor," says the proverb, "lendeth unto the Lord" (Prov. xix. 17). Yea, and the Mosaic Law, unlike most other ancient moral codes, took a sympathetic interest in the lower animals. It forbade muzzling the ox as he trode out the corn (Deut. xxv. 4); it prohibited seething a kid in his mother's milk (Exodus xxiii. 19); it declared, that "a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Proverbs xii. 10).

But, with all these merits—and they are great,—the Jews' compassion was a restricted quality, and, in Jesus' day, showed its limits in a very striking fashion. We see it in the parable of the Good Samaritan (St. Luke x. 30-37)—which, though a parable, has a framework of historical truth. Neither priest nor Levite lent a helping hand to the brother in distress, even though he was lying wounded and at the point of death. Each alike shut up his "bowels of compassion" from him; and,

through religious fanaticism, or, rather, through bigotry and spiritual pride, broke the general law that "blood is thicker than water," and that a man's friends are dearer to him than a stranger. It was left to the Samaritan—whom, notwithstanding that he was a neighbour and in part a relative, the Jew hated with a bitter hatred—to do the kindly deed, and thereby to teach a lesson of the wider humanity.

In complete contrast to this is the compassion counselled by Jesus, and practised and manifested by Himself. Helplessness, pain, suffering, in every form, ever called forth His own sympathy and evoked His aid. Where want and distress were, **there** we find Jesus, in loving attendance, ministering to men's needs. No distinction of race, or age, or sex, was allowed to interfere with His gracious beneficence; nor was the character or unworthiness of the sufferer permitted to check compassion. Publicans and harlots, as well as folk of higher social standing and of better moral reputation, were recipients of His healing kindness; and the despised and the rejected were His especial care.

Thus, then, even when repeating the old Hebrew Scriptures, or when quoting from them, our Lord imparts a fresh significance to them. Familiar utterances, falling dead upon the ear through custom, are made by Him to live anew; crabbed, narrow, precepts are expanded in their sense and widened in their application; a depth of rare meaning is brought out of what was seemingly commonplace or superficial. That is Christ's originality as a moral teacher.

One other point, however, needs to be noticed, in order to completeness,—*viz.*, **Christ's style or manner of teaching.** This assumed one of two forms: it was either (*a*) pictorial, embodying the scenes and incidents of

common life, as seen in the parables; or (*b*) paradoxical, when precepts are uttered in seemingly contradictory terms—as, for example, when it is said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it" (St. Matt. x. 39),—or when they are put in such a strong unqualified way as to make a general acceptance of them in the *literal* sense of the terms employed impossible—*e.g.*, "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (St. Matt. v. 39, 40). In the first of these forms (the parabolic), the deepest truths are clothed in the lowliest figures; and the method is effective because of its very simplicity and its suggestiveness. The second form (the paradox) is peculiarly felicitous in producing impressiveness — in arresting the attention and making a lasting effect; but its unique characteristic is, that it prevents our accepting morality as a system of mere **rules**—which, being crystallized and inexpansive, end in producing (like the Jewish rules about the Sabbath) dead mechanical performance of duty,—and forces us to seek the underlying **principles**, which are to be interpreted by common sense, and adapted in their application to the varied circumstances and situations of life. Thus did Christ secure that we should be saved from the bondage of the **letter** of morality and from the cramping effect of routine duty, and be guided, in a living and ever-quickening fashion, by its **spirit**; for, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinth. iii. 6).

CHAPTER III

ETHICS AND RELIGION

The two cannot be absolutely separated in Christian ethics—Christianity and Judaism—Christian view of conscience—Conception of sin—In the light of the Cross of Calvary—Fatherhood of God—Theology and ethics—Object of the scheme of Redemption—Practical bearings of Christian doctrine—New motives.

WHEN ethics is treated purely as a science, the endeavour is made to keep it strictly separate from religion. The ethical sanction, which has reference simply to abstract right and wrong, is regarded as entirely distinct from the religious sanction, which implies reference to a living personal God. Not less strenuous is the attempt to keep ethics apart from theology,—*i.e.*, from religion regarded as a definite scheme of dogmas, a system of doctrines sharply defined and clearly formulated. But this separation (whether from religion or from theology) is impossible in *Christian* ethics. As Christianity was grafted on the Jewish faith, it necessarily accepted the Jewish standpoint. Now, it is precisely the peculiarity of the Jewish Scriptures that they start with the assumption of the existence of God, and of God as Creator ("In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"); and they conceive man as essentially an ethical being, whose first and highest relation is to God his Maker, in

Whose image he was formed, from Whom he derived "the breath of life," and on Whom he is continually dependent. Conscience, therefore, is more than an inward faculty of moral judgment dealing with an abstract and impersonal law; it is the faculty that brings man into direct contact with the living God, and declares and endorses His will: "it is **the lamp of the Lord,**" as *Proverbs* expresses it (xx. 27), "searching all the innermost parts of the belly." Its judgments, therefore, are authoritative, because they are God's judgments; its warnings and its encouragements are to be heeded, because they are prophetic of divine punishment or of divine reward; and its praise and its blame have efficacy, because they are priestly benedictions or priestly curses uttered with the voice of heaven.

In this way, vice becomes, both to the Jew and to the Christian, more than moral evil—it is sin; more than breach of an impersonal law—it is disobedience of a personal Law-giver and transgression of His will. Hence the intensity with which the Jew and the Christian alike condemn sin, and the reason of the extreme pungency of their remorse and the bitterness of their penitence: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight" (Ps. li. 4): "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Hence, also, the peculiar depth of their serenity and peace of mind, when their conscience is at rest: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2): "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Philip. iv. 7). This is more than feeling of self-satisfaction, or pleasing inward approbation: it is, as both Old Testa-

ment psalmist and New Testament apostle conceive it, "the Godhead's most benignant grace."[1]

Thus far, Christianity and Judaism are agreed. But Christianity has teaching special to itself. This arises from the fact that it has put sin and God in a new light. Never was "the exceeding sinfulness" of sin apparent till it was presented in connexion with the Cross of Calvary. We realize its true vileness only when we see it, in the fierce light of Jesus' death, as a thing so abhorrent to the Divine nature that it needed the sacrifice of God's own Son to atone for it: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body didst Thou prepare me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me), to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 5). And, along with this, in that same Divine tragedy on Golgotha, we have given us a surprising revelation of the character of God. Old conceptions fall before the new. God is not merely the Creator and Sustainer of the world, He is not merely the Moral Governor of the universe, He is not—as men had so often supposed—the exacting taskmaster delighting in imposing burdens and punishing the rebellious. He is the heavenly **Father**, loving the erring and the backward, and drawing them to Himself "with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea xi. 4): "for, God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (St. John iii. 16).

These doctrines are theological, but they are inseparably bound up with Christian morals; inasmuch as, the New Testament Theology has far-reaching **practical** bearings. It formulates the scheme of redemption. Now, the object of that scheme is twofold: (*a*) the removal from

[1] Wordsworth, *Ode to Duty*.

men's consciences of the paralyzing sense of guilt, or overpowering burden of sin; and (*b*) the production in men of a new life—of purity in heart, in speech, and in behaviour. It aims at saving and reforming mankind, and the means of reformation is love; the manifestation of the Father's love in Christ becoming a great moral force that lays hold of the froward and estranged, and begets in them love in return, making them children of obedience, not by compulsion, but of free will and through hearty submission. Thus is sinful human nature transformed through active faith; and a new life begins, showing itself outwardly in "the fruit of the Spirit"—*viz.*, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance" (Galatians v. 22). Belief conditions regeneration; and even such a dogma as that of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit has its important *ethical* aspect, expressing, as it does, the divine agency whereby light and purity are imparted to men, and the moral life is quickened and deepened, sweetened and strengthened.

Thus, Christian doctrines supply new motives to righteousness; and that is their great **ethical** value. There is a new motive in the manifestation of the Father's love in Christ's death; there is a new motive in Jesus' love disclosed in His redemptive work; there is a new motive, also, in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God, therefore, in your body" (1 Corinth. vi. 19, 20). "For, if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit

offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews ix. 13, 14). Even the duty of universal beneficence, on which New Testament Scripture so strongly insists, is counselled on religious grounds. When Jesus enjoins "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," He gives as His reason "that ye may be the children of your Father, which is in Heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (St. Matt. v. 43-45).

SECTION B

THE HIGHEST GOOD

CHAPTER IV

HAPPINESS

Two competing conceptions: pleasure and virtue—Lower view of pleasure—Higher view—Happiness transformed into blessedness—Liberty—Stoical view of happiness—Pleasure and pain—Happiness resides in character—Christianity and Stoicism—Christian view of pleasure and pain—Fellowship with God.

NATURALLY enough, systems of morals greatly exercise themselves with the subject of Happiness. As it is universally recognized that man instinctively craves for happiness, it becomes a point of importance to determine wherein this happiness really consists, how it may be obtained, and what its place is in the general body of ethical doctrine.

There have been two great competing conceptions. One has taken happiness pre-eminently as pleasure, and the other has taken it as virtue.[1] By exaggerating the differences, these two conceptions have been represented as altogether antagonistic. View pleasure simply in its lower

[1] Represented, in the ancient Greek world, by Epicureanism and Stoicism respectively.

or grosser forms, and, plainly, it cannot with any propriety be set forth as the aim and end of man's being and the source of his true happiness. If the highest idea of life be, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry" (St. Luke xii. 19), then morality, in any proper meaning of the term, is impossible, and happiness is a chimera. Whatever else ethics may or may not be, it must be ennobling; and nothing that is not ennobling can be accepted as the test or standard of morality. On the other hand, Happiness must be a lasting condition; but the power to enjoy the grosser pleasures by and by ceases. We know that the faculties of mere pleasure, as represented by the selfish passions and desires, soon reach a point of surfeit or satiety; and once a faculty gets surfeited with the very thing that itself craves for, unutterable misery (not happiness) is the inevitable and sure result. Not only "the world passeth away" to those who trust in it, but "the *lust* thereof" as well (1 John ii. 17).

Yet, clearly, pleasure need not be thus viewed as low and debasing.[1] There are pleasures that are absolutely pure, and that are in the highest degree elevating and refining—intellectual and æsthetic pleasures, for example. So that pleasure, obviously, must have some favourable relation to virtue; and a virtue that had not a pleasure of its own, that did not give satisfaction and contentment to its possessor, would not be a virtue. The truth is, that the sharply-cut distinction that is usually drawn between pleasure and virtue is valid only when pleasure is restricted to the base and carnal: in other respects, it is a false antithesis.

Hence, to surmount this false antithesis, and yet to conserve the rights of each of the two factors, Christianity

[1] No great philosophy, ancient or modern, ever did so regard it—least of all, the philosophy of Epicurus, although degenerate Epicureans frequently brought the doctrine of pleasure into disrepute.

transforms Happiness into Blessedness. This is to intensify the moral life and to spiritualize it. While quite allowing the desirableness of pleasure and sanctioning an appreciation of it, Christianity turns what might otherwise be only a temporary or evanescent state of feeling into a permanent or abiding condition, fully satisfying to the soul, by grounding it in God. The source of it is man's consciousness of restored fellowship and communion with the Divine, and, so, his consciousness of the removal of what would keep him back from this fellowship and communion — *viz.*, sin, or wilful transgression. This means **Liberty**—liberty, first, in the sense of freedom from sin, deliverance from the slavery or bondage of evil (for, "every one that committeth sin, is the bond-servant [*slave*] of sin"), and, secondly, in the sense of free access to God, such as children have to their father ("for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father").[2] It means, further, not only possession of liberty, but also power or fitness to enjoy it, and, so, cheerful and willing obedience to God's will and law.

Perhaps, no higher pagan conception of happiness was ever attained than that which was achieved by the ancient Stoics. They placed Happiness in, what they termed, "fulness" or "even flow" of life: by which they meant that the **quality** (as determined by virtue), not the quantity or the duration, of a man's life is what constitutes its value. That man lives "happily" who has lived "fully" (therefore, virtuously), whether his days be very few in number or whether they have gone beyond the threescore years and ten. Time makes no difference to the ethical estimate. All depends upon kind or quality; and, if that has been perfect, the life, and, there-

[1] St. John viii. 34. [2] Romans viii. 15.

fore, happiness, has been perfect. "Life is long," says Seneca (*Epistles*, 12), "if it is full; but it is full when the soul has completed its development and has shown all its latent powers. . . . Even as a short man may be a perfect man: so, in a small measure of time there may be a perfect life. Age is among things external to us. How long I shall live, is an accident; how long I shall be a good man, depends upon myself." In which case, what of pain and pleasure? These, to the Stoic were neither good nor bad.[1] The one was not to be sedulously pursued, nor the other to be studiously avoided; but each was to be accepted, when it came, simply as an ordinance of nature, and to be submitted to with absolute indifference. There must be no ready welcoming of this and eager hounding away of that; but, as neither of them could really affect a man's soul, but only his body or his temporal comfort, they were both to be regarded with entire unconcern.

The root of this teaching was the doctrine that it is only what lies within a man's power, only what is subject to the control of his will, that can affect his character, and, consequently, his highest interests; while everything that lies outside the sphere of his will is simply indifferent, and ought to be viewed with apathy or passionlessness and a tranquil mind. Now, pleasure and pain lie outside the sphere of the will: they are not ours, and so cannot harm us. Let us, therefore, look upon them as naught.

In part, Christian ethics is in sympathy with Stoicism. That happiness is, first and chiefly, a thing of the char-

[1] Some of the Stoics, indeed,—Cleanthes, for instance,—went even farther than this, and maintained that pleasure is not only not a good, but is "contrary to nature" and "worthless." It was the opinion of Cleanthes that all the emotions—love, fear, grief—*are weaknesses:* they lack that "tension" which alone gives virtue, and constitutes in a man self-control and robust moral fibre.

acter, and not of mere external circumstances or of passing feeling—due to upright living, and not to the abundance of good things that one possesses, — is granted wholly. But Christianity goes farther and lays the true source of it in a consciousness of reconciliation with the Divine and communion with heaven. Happiness depends on what a man **is**, and not, in the first instance, on what a man **has**: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (St. Matt. vi. 33). It is specially explicit in declaring that there has been a wilful breach between the creature and the Creator: sin, transgression, has intervened to separate and estrange the one from the other, and in this estrangement and separation resides man's real misery and unrest. Through Christ, according to Scripture teaching, the breach has been surmounted and reunion has been effected, and, by faith, the receiver lays hold upon His work. Whence, happiness, in its intensest form of blessedness (or, as it is frequently called in the Scriptures, "rest" or "peace"), ensues: "The Kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans xiv. 17).

On the other hand, Christianity does not accept the stoical paradox that pleasure is not a good, nor pain an evil. That paradox led, in the hands of the Stoics themselves, to the conception of the ideal sage as a human monstrosity, and to the doctrine of the permissibility of suicide. Pleasure is the concomitant of the efficient working of a man's faculties and activities—the highest of them no less than the lowest: it is a fact of the human constitution,—the index of health, physical and mental; and men naturally and properly aim at it and rejoice in it.[1] Pain, again, is the concomitant of the inefficient working of human faculty or activity, and is a

[1] The Stoics regarded it as indicating decline of vital energy.

sign of disorder or disease—warning us against impending danger, either in the physical organism or in the mental constitution, and pointing to the need of a speedy remedy; but it is not a thing that we should naturally cherish or pursue for its own sake. Indeed, in New Testament Scripture, pain is associated with death, and death is declared to be the consequence of sin. Sin, pain, death—each is represented as *alien* to man; and each is an evil, although it may be made conducive to good. One of the most distinctive marks of the future life, according to *Revelation* (xxi. 4), is, "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more **pain**: for the former things are passed away"; and one of Christ's claims on men's gratitude while He lived on earth was, that He was the Good Physician, healing men's bodies, as well as ministering to their souls. There is nothing necessarily *selfish*, therefore, in a man's feeling pleased; nor is it a proof of selfishness that he desires to get rid of pain.

Nevertheless, pleasure is not, to Christianity any more than to Stoicism, the highest good, nor is pain the greatest evil. To both, happiness is compatible with much personal suffering; and feeble health and sickness may be turned into instruments for purifying and strengthening character. But, as the secret lies, according to Christianity, in right relations with God, as the centre of human happiness is transferred from consciousness of moral rectitude to consciousness of fellowship with the living Deity, who is the source of moral rectitude and also the universal Father, man's attitude towards life and the events of life becomes wholly changed. The world assumes a new aspect to him, and what befalls him here is accepted with a different grace and in a different spirit: "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Corinth. v. 17).

CHAPTER V

STRICTNESS OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

I. Object of Christianity—Pain and sacrifice indispensable as a means to blessedness—Difference here between Christian and non-Christian ethics—The reason of it—1. Due appreciation of the nature and consequences of sin—View of Socrates inadequate—Right conception of sin—The remedy—2. Results of sin eternal—This gives a peculiar solemnity to living—Joy of release from sin—Austerity a means, not an end—II. Objection to Christ's treatment of property and riches — His condemnation not unqualified—Yet, His warning stern—Case of the Covetous Brother—Covetousness leads to self-indulgence, and that to spiritual death—Parable of the Rich Fool.

I

THE one great object of Christianity is to bring joy and gladness to mankind, and this it does by enunciation of reconciliation with God and the means of it. Christ's work is the removal of sin from the individual's conscience, and the restoration of fellowship and filial intercourse with the Supreme. Jesus likened Himself to a joyful Bridegroom, and His disciples to joyous "sons of the bride-chamber" (St. John iii. 29). Moroseness, therefore, and gloom are excluded. Nevertheless, joy and gladness, as has just been said, are not incompatible with pain and sacrifice. On the contrary, man's ethical condition being what it is, and the circumstances of human life being what they are, pain and sacrifice are

indispensable as a means to happiness. If sin be man's greatest evil and righteousness his highest good, then sin must be fought with and resisted at whatever cost—righteousness must be won, however great the effort. Hence the strong and even startling note of severity that pervades the Christian ethics. **Repentance** stands at the very threshold—not mere consciousness of sin and sorrow for it, but hatred of it and departure from it (however painful may be the process), **amendment or reformation** of life by yielding up oneself to God, and to the guidance of His Spirit. Self-renunciation of the most absolute kind is demanded of the follower of Jesus. Not only is he to sit loose to "the world," he is to despise and strenuously withstand it. Riches, honour, fame—these, and the like, are certainly not forbidden, but they are to be strictly watched, lest they become a snare; and even the tenderest and most natural social relationships—those of family, friendship, etc.—are at once to be severed, if they take too strong a hold of the affections. The Christian must be prepared to part with what is nearest and dearest to himself,—even his own right hand or right eye, if it offend him (St. Matt. v. 29, 30). He is to separate from father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, if they stand between him and his Christian calling (St. Luke xiv. 26). Christ Himself claims to have come, in the first instance, "to cast **fire** on the earth" (St. Luke xii. 49); and the immediate result of His Gospel was "not peace, but a sword" (St. Matt. x. 34).

This extreme severity—not unconditioned, however, be it observed—marks off Christianity from ancient Greek ethics, and, indeed, from ethics in general. What is the reason of it? The reason of it is, perception of the magnitude of the issues at stake in man's earthly

life, involving a due estimate of sin and demanding immortality.

1. So long as there was no true appreciation of the nature and disastrous consequences of sin—so long as evil was looked upon merely as a defect, as ignorance, or, it might be, as a want of harmony between man and his environment,—there could scarcely have arisen that deep consciousness of the gravity of living that characterizes the teaching of Christ and His apostles. The most that seemed necessary for a man to do, in order to find peace and satisfaction, was to withdraw from the world and live in solitary communion with himself, enjoying the pleasures of philosophic thought or calm unruffled contemplation.

But with Christianity came the intense consciousness of the real character of sin, of its appalling consequences, and of its universal sway. Sin is now seen to be more than a defect: it is a positive disease, self-induced by man, polluting everything,[1] and eating as a canker into the soul. It was taught by Socrates, and became a commonplace of the Greek schools afterwards, that vice is ignorance and virtue knowledge;[2] or, as it was otherwise expressed, that no man sins willingly. Sin, in other words, was conceived as a mere intellectual limitation—it was a lack of knowledge; which being removed, sin would immediately cease. To this and all similar notions, Christianity is opposed. Sin, according

[1] Even outward Nature is affected by the presence of sin in the world, according to the deep thought of St. Paul, "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans viii. 19-22).

[2] See the *Protagoras* of Plato. The position was accepted by the Stoics.

to Scripture, is no mere intellectual limitation: it is a thing of **the will**—it is conscious rebellion against God, deliberate transgression of His law. Hence, knowledge is not the cure for it. Nor can escape from it be secured by withdrawing into solitude—monasticism and the hermit's cell are no safeguard; for, the root of the evil is within—it goes deep down to the centre of human inclinations and desires. The desert is the home of "the wild beasts."[1] As a writer of last century quaintly expresses it: "A man may be dead to the world in the midst of its temptations, and he may meet with the devil in a wilderness as well as in a court; and pride and sourness are extremely apt to grow in the shade." Sin pervades the world; and, wherever it finds access, it pollutes and destroys. It must, then, be severely dealt with. There can be no happiness, much less blessedness, where it holds sway.

2. But, further, the results of submission to sin are not temporal only, but **eternal.** This is distinctive of Christian teaching. Man's life is not limited by the threescore years and ten; there is a hereafter, of endless duration, for which the present life is but a preparation. This gives a peculiar solemnity to life, and deepens our sense of responsibility. Man, says Christianity, is, above all things, a spiritual being, whose present existence conditions his future; the character formed now is perpetuated indefinitely, so that the present life and the life to come are not two separate and isolated lives, but one life, the parts of which are of a piece, so that the Seer of Patmos can lay down the principle of the future thus: "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still"

[1] St. Mark i. 13.

(Rev. xxii. 11). Without this doctrine of a future life, brought to light by Jesus in the Gospel, the austerity of Christian morality would only be partially intelligible. Christianity must of necessity be serious and severe, as facing sin, if sin works ruin both here and hereafter.

Yet, in proportion to the gravity as turned towards the disease, is the joy when the disease is eradicated. Union with God secures peace and infuses strength, so that warfare becomes no hardship—rather it is quickening and exhilarating, seeing that the warrior is conscious of ample power in himself to conquer. **Sin is already to the Christian a vanquished factor**, and his new life begun now is the pledge and earnest of that which is to be. So that the strictness or severity of Christian ethics, at which so many have stumbled, is justified on the ground that only thus can true and abiding gladness be attained. Were austerity set forth as an end in itself, Christianity would stand self-condemned; but it is only a means, and a means that accomplishes the highest end —it effects eternal blessedness and peace. It expresses man's attitude towards sin, or towards "the world," in so far as the world is sinful and the source of temptation; it does not express his inmost nature or his ultimate end. "For the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans vi. 21-23).

II

Still, exception is often taken, and very strong objection made, to Christ's attitude towards the world, and, in particular, to His seemingly unqualified condemnation of riches and property. That His condemnation is

"unqualified," cannot be granted. His treatment of the rich young ruler (St. Luke xviii. 18-30), for instance, was dictated by the fact that the youth was running great risk in **trusting** in his riches; and the parable of Dives and Lazarus (St. Luke xvi. 19-31) does not condemn wealth, but the **abuse** of it, or the **irresponsible use** of it. But that Jesus is stern in His note of warning against property and riches is indisputable. Yet, He had good reason for it. Let us see by a typical example.

Once, there came to Him (St. Luke xii. 13-21) a worldly-minded man, making the request, "Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." The circumstances seem to have been these:—One of two brothers had fallen heir to an inheritance—perhaps, it was left him by his father, or, perhaps, it was bequeathed him by a friend. No matter; the inheritance was his, and the law could not take it from him. Nevertheless, the other brother was envious, and desired a share of the inheritance. Presumably, he could not wrest it from him at law—otherwise, he would have done it: he could simply trust to persuasion and entreaty. But the man in possession, for good reason or for bad, was deaf alike to argument and to appeal. And so the aggrieved brother came to Jesus, and tried to enlist Him in his cause. Perhaps, after all, the complainer had really a grievance. The possession coveted is denominated "**the** inheritance"—apparently, therefore, the family inheritance, which had fallen of right to the other brother, but regarding which this brother thought that he himself had, at any rate, **moral** claims. But the other brother thought differently; and, probably, he was right. From Jesus' answer, it may be gathered that the complainer was a greedy man—a selfish man, a covetous man; and to put property, either in the shape of money or of land, into such a man's hands, is the worst thing, both for the

man himself and for other people, that could possibly be done. The best thing that you can do with a selfish man, or with a self-indulgent man, is to strip him of all his goods. It is only when he finds himself poor and wretched, and feels the necessity of bestirring himself to exertion in order to gain a livelihood, that he comes to realize the dignity of life, and the enormous responsibility that prosperity or good fortune entails. And so Jesus made answer, "Man, who made Me a judge, or a divider over **you**?" The emphasis is on "**you**." In other words, "I am, indeed, a judge, and I can apportion gifts and adjust rights, but only among Mine own. You and I move in different spheres; not to **you** does my jurisdiction extend. The circle in which My influence is felt and in which My word is law, is the circle of the pure and the unworldly; the circle in which you live is that of the worldly and the selfish. Judge you who may, **I** cannot interfere, and I will not." And then, in order to bring out the true character of the petitioner and to emphasize his peril, He added a strong warning against covetousness, and concluded with the brief, but telling, parable of the Rich Fool. "Money you want? Property is it? a share in your brother's inheritance? Well, suppose you got it: suppose you got even far more than that. Suppose that things prospered with you beyond your very wildest expectation; so that your storehouses and barns grew far too small to hold your fruits, and you had to build new and larger ones. What then? Why, from bad you would go to worse; and, the more you prospered in worldly things, the less would you amass of spiritual riches. Beginning with covetousness, you would end in self-indulgence. Self would come to occupy your whole interest and concern: your sole desire would be how best to live at ease, to 'eat, drink, and be merry,' till the day would come when God

would call you into reckoning. Suddenly, perhaps, He would call you; at all events, it would be when you were unprepared. In the midst of your self-indulgence and your mirth, the voice would come, Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee. Then, the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?"

Now, surely, if this be the end of covetousness, Christ was right in warning men against riches. If covetousness leads to self-indulgence and to the embruting of the reason, happiness is impossible; and highest good there can be none, for the man on whom it lays its firm grasp. Austerity here is certainly a necessity, in the interests of blessedness itself.[1]

[1] The degrading character of covetousness is frequently referred to in the New Testament. With keen spiritual insight, St. Paul regards covetousness as *idolatry* (Col. iii. 5), and classes the covetous man along with sinners of the grossest kind (1 Corinth. vi. 10; Eph. v. 3, 5). The "idol," in the last resort, is the covetous man's own worst self.

CHAPTER VI

CONSEQUENCES—REWARDS

Men guided in their conduct by a consideration of consequences—Reasonableness of pursuing the highest good—Rewards the outcome of character—Connexion between sin and punishment—Sense of guilt—Irony of seeming success—Deterioration of character—Contagious influence of vicious conduct—Sin and pardon—Virtue and its reward—Reward presupposes fitness—Case of James and John—Promise to Peter and the other apostles—Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard—Reward not a bare equivalent, but to be conceived from the side of God's generosity—Rewards here are means to an end—Divine recompense to be viewed in the light of the Christian eschatology—Reward accorded to aspiration and moral effort, rather than to actual achievement—Moral life and progress.

Men are naturally guided in their conduct, to a large extent, by a consideration of the consequences of actions. The very instinct of self-preservation leads us to eschew what is disastrous to our welfare, and impels us to choose (except in fatuous moments) what is conducive thereto. Prudence itself dictates that passion shall not be allowed to rule supreme, regardless of one's health or happiness, and forbids that the individual shall indulge himself unreservedly in present pleasure without thought of, or concern for, the future. It is obviously irrational that a man, being a member of society and dependent on the protection of society for his own rights and liberties, should live in defiance of the obligations that social bonds

impose upon him, ignoring the claims of others and neglectful of their rights. Further, if it is lawful for us to have regard to our own good at all, it is lawful for us to have regard to our highest good; and if it be so that "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John ii. 17), it is the part of wisdom to pursue "the will of God," and to prefer the permanent and satisfying to what is transitory and breeds satiety.

It is this fact of the reasonableness of pursuing the highest good that justifies the appeal to the consequences of actions as a motive or inducement to well-doing. Hence the insistence with which the New Testament places before us the rewards of righteousness and the punishments of vice, both in this world and in the next. Yet, both the rewards and the punishments, even when they are conceived as directly sent by God, are not to be taken as something in themselves irrelevant to the actions, and simply imposed upon them by an external power: they are the necessary and inevitable outcome of well-doing (or ill-doing) itself. They are inherent in the actions, not added on to them from without: they issue from them in the order of necessary development, and so become their "fruit." The man who ends by being a moral wreck, has made himself so; and they who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind (Hosea viii. 7). The law is, "He that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons" (Colossians iii. 25): "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians vi. 7, 8).

Take the connexion between punishment and sin.

The "recompense" here is not arbitrary, but inevitable. First comes the haunting fear of guilt, the sense of the **desert** of punishment, even when overt punishment does not immediately ensue—the pain and terror of remorse. Next, we may notice the irony of **seeming success**, when, in Scripture language, God grants the sinner his request, but, along with it, sends "leanness" into his soul.

> Quit the great ranks of knighthood, you will walk
> For ever with a tortured double self;
> A self that will be hungry while you feast,
> Will blush for shame while you are glorified,
> Will feel the ache and chill of desolation
> E'en in the very bosom of your home.[1]

Then comes the worst of all punishments, the **deterioration of character**, when the transgressor loses the power of perceiving righteousness, of appreciating its value, or of responding to its call. To which may be added the **contagious influence** of the individual's vicious conduct upon others. In all this, the retribution is appalling; but it comes as the necessary consequence of indulged vice. And even when sin is pardoned, there is no reason to believe that it does not leave a permanent effect somehow. Once allow the moral tone to be greatly lowered and the moral sensibility to be blunted, and there results an inability, of a greater or a less extent, to rise as high in moral eminence as we should otherwise have done. Although the glory of the redeemed in the future world, according to Scripture teaching, is one, there are **degrees** of it; for, "one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Corinth. xv. 41). It seems that carnal desires and earthly appetites can never be permitted free scope with impunity: they are like "the goblin horseman in the legend; wherever that footfall strikes, the grass is blasted, and no grass will grow upon it any more for ever."

[1] George Eliot.

On the other hand, take virtue and its rewards. Here, too, the connexion is equally indissoluble. Right living inevitably means **inward peace**, and it secures the respect of men and is a power for good with others; but it means, also, strengthening of character, increase in moral capacity, deepening of spiritual experience, firmer grasp of the principles of righteousness, clearer insight into their meaning, and stronger affection for them. **Reward presupposes fitness**, as is shown in a striking manner in a little incident in the life of our Lord (St. Matt. xx. 20-28). Once, the mother of Zebedee's children came with her sons to Jesus, and made the request, "Grant that these my two sons may sit the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." Her ambition, was, indeed, intelligible; but it betrayed ignorance of the laws of righteous recompense. Obviously, the thought of her sons' desert had not entered into her mind; she had simply yielded to the impulse of a mother's heart, desiring place, position, rank, for them. She thought that, as Jesus was now coming as a King, He would exercise the privilege of kings and distribute His gifts and assign places of honour in His kingdom simply according to His favour. This would have been possible, had Jesus' kingdom been "of this world." But, as it was not "of this world,"[1] but was a Spiritual Kingdom, claiming dominion over the hearts and thoughts of men, the King's gifts had to be dispensed on a different principle. Places and rank (said Jesus, in effect) are the reward of worth; they are given to men, according to their fitness to hold them. Aptitude conditions everything: there can be no favouritism here. Places must be won, not simply bestowed: "To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." In

[1] See St. John xviii. 33-38.

other words, fitness determines position: and our place in the Kingdom is not assigned us in an arbitrary way, but is dependent on what we ourselves **are**, or what we are **able to become**. It is, indeed, "prepared" for us by the Father; but this term "prepared" carries in it the idea of **sufficiency, suitability, fitness,**—so that the Father's preparation is as much a preparation of the recipient's character for his position, as of his position for his character.

Of similar import is Jesus' promise made to Peter, when the latter put the question, "Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what then shall we have?" "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (St. Matt. xix. 27, 28). Nor does the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (St. Matt. xx. 1-16) convey any different meaning; although, at first sight, it appears to do so. It is given in immediate connexion with the reply to Peter, and, therefore, must be in keeping with it. It deals, indeed, ostensibly with work and wages; but the principle on which the wages are paid is far from the ordinary workaday one of payment **by time**. Worth, as discerned by the householder who hires the labourers, is what regulates it; reversing accredited custom and overturning selfish expectations. This is the sentence that gives the clue to the interpretation: "Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* or is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

Here, then, we have the Christian conception of reward,—*viz.*, something that crowns merit, that is the

outcome of worth. Yet, it must not be conceived as an exact equivalent (like wages) for time expended and work done. That is far too commercial a view to take of it: even those labourers in the vineyard who complained saw that the "penny," as disbursed, was not strictly a wage; for, "they supposed that they would receive more" (St. Matt. xx. 10). God is both a Father and a King; and so Scripture represents Him as rewarding obedience, both here and hereafter, not in the spirit of a master paying his servants (according to formal contract), but in the generous spirit of a royal father. Merit, indeed, is the ground of it, inasmuch as, without merit in the recipient, reward could not be; but the bounty is not to be measured in quantity by the rule of mere stipulated hire. The relation that exists, according to Scripture, between those that seek God and God as the "rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," is not one to which mere commercial justice is applicable: it is one that lies in the higher sphere of Divine beneficence and generosity. Here, reward is the outpouring of love; and this cannot be limited by any mere consideration of exact proportion, in terms of the Law Court. Hence, the rewards of righteousness that Christ promised His followers on earth are often very surprising. **Persecution** is one of the chief of them (St. Mark x. 30), men's hatred and bitter opposition; and sufferings are to be looked upon as tokens of the Father's love and blessings in disguise (St. John xv. 20; xvi. 33). "*Prosperity*," as Bacon puts it,[1] "is the blessing of the Old Testament; *Adversity* is the blessing of the New; which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favour." The meaning of all this is, that ease is dangerous; while progress can be made and spiritual health maintained only if we are not allowed to rest in any one stage of

[1] *Essays*, "Of Adversitie."

attainment, but are compelled to go beyond it, and to push our way onward, though it should be by "confused noise of warriors" and "garments rolled in blood." Such rewards are not themselves ends, but only means to an end; and the end is, that they "work in us a far more exceeding, even an eternal, weight of glory" (2 Corinth. iv. 17).

In this way, divine recompense cannot be fully understood, unless it be conceived as pointing forward, unless it be read in the light of the **Christian eschatology** (or teaching about Last Things). Man's life on earth is a probation period—a preparation for a hereafter; and the present discipline is inexplicable, unless taken in connexion with the coming day of judgment (when the verdicts of conscience shall be ratified and enforced), and the rest of eternity. Yet, the rewards of the final assize and of eternity—the ultimate rewards towards which those of time lead up and for which they prepare—although often expressed in Scripture in materialistic phraseology (see, for instance, the language of the parables regarding future torments), are still concerned with character. For, the New Testament pictures of the joys and bliss of the redeemed in heaven all centre in the fact of their redemption, of rescue from sin and security against lapsing: it is distinctive of the New Jerusalem that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. xxi. 27). On the other hand, the misery of the unredeemed is represented as that of a corrupt nature, keeping them away from righteousness, and condemning them to impurity and the agony of remorse: "for, without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie"

(Rev. xxii. 15). The ethical law is expressed in the pregnant sentence already quoted: "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

Reward, then, as conceived in Christian ethics, is the outcome — the necessary and inevitable outcome — of character; and yet, in amount, it is not a bare equivalent for work done. It is to be estimated on the different scale of Divine generosity. We move here in the realm of Divine love, — where God is the Father, and the recipients are His sons—"and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans viii. 17); so that the **rewards** are also **gifts**, and none the less gifts that they are rewards—that they are accorded to worth, and are both encouragements to righteousness and tokens of the Father's approbation of His children's conduct.

There is still a point to notice. Reward is accorded to **aspiration and moral effort**, rather than to actual achievement. Ethical perfection is evermore an ideal, and even the best of men fall short of it; and the better a man is, the more vividly is he conscious of his own shortcomings and failings. To every one, the counsel is appropriate, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinth. x. 12). Moral life is a race —a progress. Even St. Paul could say of himself: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I

press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philip. iii. 12-14). Effort, earnest desire, energy, and sincerity of purpose, are the index of worth: and a man's settled aim, the general bent and inclination of his will, what he yearns to become, shows us the true man, better than what, at any moment, he may happen to be. "The measure of a man's worth is the worth of his aims."[1]

[1] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* vii. 3.

SECTION C

CHARACTER AND ITS DEVELOPMENT[1]

CHAPTER VII

INWARDNESS THE TEST

Character conditions service—Morality resides in the motive and intention—Jesus' teaching here—The results of it—(1) Struck at formalism and hypocrisy—The Decalogue—How to be interpreted—Jewish law of retaliation—Love to neighbours and enemies—(2) Relation of inward life to conduct—Conduct comes after character—Two things condemned: (*a*) Legality; (*b*) Ostentation — Exemplified in almsgiving, praying, and fasting—How the test becomes outward.

IT is a trite saying of the moralists, from Plato and the Stoics downwards, that a man's first concern is to **be**, and not to **do**, — that character conditions service. Morality attaches to the doer, not to the thing done; and it resides in the agent's inward motive and intention, not in his mere outward deed or action. "He who silently meditates an evil deed," says the old Latin poet,[2] "bears all the guilt of the deed, just as though he had done it." Hence, it follows that a man's chief endeavour,

[1] The psychological aspect of the formation of character, dealing mainly with Habit and its laws, I have worked out in *Theism as grounded in Human Nature* (pp. 325-340).

[2] Juvenal, *Satires* xiii. 29, 30.

if he would attain to righteousness, should be to purify his thoughts, to regulate his desires, and to elevate his affections. If rectitude is to be in very truth his aim, he must guard the citadel of his heart.

This maxim Jesus put in the very forefront of His teaching: He made it the keynote of His ethical doctrine. "Not that which goeth into the mouth," He said, "defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (St. Matt. xv. 11). "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh" (St. Luke vi. 45). "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8).

This stress on the heart, as the seat of morality, effected various things.

1. In the first place, it necessitated a change in what had been the usual way of estimating and regarding duty: it removed the criterion from without to within, and thereby struck at mere formalism, conventionalism, and hypocrisy.

The magnitude of this change is seen in the application of the principle made by Christ Himself to certain ethical practices and customs of His day.

He takes, first, the Decalogue. To the Jew, the Ten Commandments were God's Words written on two tables of stone. No one could but reverence and respect them: they came with an august authority. But, for all that, they were in themselves merely **outward**: they did not necessarily touch the heart. Hence, it was very easy for men to pay them an external deference, and thereby to pass themselves off as righteous men. This was actually done; and, in degenerate days, it was the thing usually

done,—till high-minded prophets like Jeremiah, burning with a zeal for righteousness and indignant with their countrymen for their immoralities and hypocrisy, inveighed in unmeasured terms against the powerlessness of the merely written Law, and looked forward to the time when the Old Covenant—with its ceremonies and formalism and its moral precepts engraved on stone tables—should pass away, and a new covenant should be made with Israel, when God's laws should be put into men's minds and written in their hearts, and people would accord them a willing and spontaneous obedience (see Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34).[1]

With Christ's advent, such a time had come. And so the Saviour, in His Sermon on the Mount, strikes the same note as the prophet. Taking up the Ten Commandments, He gives a fresh and deeper interpretation of them, in a few typical examples (St. Matt. v. 21-37). He selects the sixth, the seventh, and the ninth—"Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"; and, in each case, He shows that the sin lies, not merely, and not mainly, in the outward act, but, first and chiefly, in the inward thought, or passion, and what He counsels is, to check the thought, and kill the passion, and thus avoid the sin. In other words, He goes deep down to the root of evil, and, striking at the root, shows us the only effective means whereby the Law may be kept.

In like manner, He takes certain of the leading Jewish maxims, and purifies and ennobles them by transferring them to the heart. At the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation, nothing higher could be laid down as a guiding principle than "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (St. Matt. v. 38-42). But the inadequacy of this as a permanent rule for mankind is evident

[1] See, also, Hebrews viii. 8-13.

immediately you apply the test of character. No perfect man is he who acts simply upon that principle,—although, during man's moral minority, or in times of lawlessness and barbarism, it may be the only perfection open to him. But **he** is the ideally perfect man who harbours no resentment or revenge in his bosom, and who meekly submits to oppression and injustice, if thereby he may win the evil-doer and the oppressor to a nobler spirit.

So, the Hebrew Scriptures permitted, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy"; but Jesus, with deepest insight, condemns hatred in every form, and commands the practice of goodwill and affection even towards rivals and bitter foes (St. Matt. v. 43-48). He knew that love alone can conquer, — love alone can win; and He had the utmost confidence that love **would** ultimately conquer, and that bitter foes and rivals would be turned into friends through its power.

Thus Jesus transformed the whole aspect of morality and religion by the one test of **inwardness**; and, while founding His own kingdom upon the abiding principles of the old Jewish faith, breathed a new spirit into them, and thereby created His great spiritual revolution.

2. But another consequence follows. The heart does not stand alone in determining righteousness. The inward must become outward, if it is genuine principle, and if the individual is to fulfil his function as a social being. **Character necessarily issues in conduct.**

> Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd
> But to fine issues.[1]

But, let it be noted, conduct only comes **after**

[1] Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, Act i. Sc. 1.

character: **that** is its true place. It is an effect that bespeaks a cause; it is a result, from which you may legitimately draw an inference; it is "works," issuing from faith; it is "fruits," showing the kind of tree that bears them. Conduct, then, has ethical value only as a manifestation of the inner life.

This condemns two things.

(*a*) First, it condemns judging by mere outward conformity to righteousness. That in itself is but legality—sufficient to secure against civil punishment, but having nothing of morality about it. (*b*) Secondly, it condemns accepting ostentation as sincerity. Jesus illustrated by three examples, which may be taken as representative of the whole class. He took alms-giving, praying, and fasting (St. Matt. vi. 2-18)—**religious** offices, indeed, but to be judged on their **ethical** side. In the case of all three, it was the practice of the hypocritical of Jesus' time to perform them with the utmost ostentation *for a purpose.* The outward work of performance was unimpeachable, but the motive and the mode were reprehensible; and these determined the merit. The mode was publicity; and the object of the publicity was to attract the attention and to gain the admiration of men. To the deeply observant, the conduct still revealed the character of the doer, but the meaning was not on the surface. Men allowed themselves to be deceived by the mere parade of righteousness, and accorded the applause that was sought but not deserved.

Thus, then, the seat of morality, according to Christianity, is the heart (the affections, thoughts, and will); and the test of righteousness is inwardness. Yet, a pure heart means pure speech and pure deeds as well; while the contrary is also true (although there may be practical difficulties, sometimes, in applying it), that

impurity of heart taints a man's life and vitiates his conduct. Hence, there is no real inconsistency when it is maintained (as it frequently is) that from a man's speech, or from his outward behaviour, you may infer his character. Jesus sometimes lays the stress on **words**: "for, by thy words," He says, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (St. Matt. xii. 37). This is legitimate; for, the outward (though the interpretation in some cases is not easy) is the index of the inward, and its significance is derived from its connexion with the thoughts. To the penetrative eye, action reveals, even while it conceals, the actor.

CHAPTER VIII

MORAL PROGRESS

I. The meaning of character—How character develops—Case of the lily of the field—Contrast of Solomon in all his glory. II. Selfishness is vice; unselfishness is virtue—Selfishness defined—How reprehensible—Doctrine of the two selves—In what way character is formed. 1. Through life's temptations — Our Lord's three temptations in the wilderness — These typical—Parables of the kingdom—Temptations to be **met**, but not to be **sought**—Example of Christ. 2. By a brave use of spiritual power—Case of the Seventy disciples—Character to be tested by the amount of resistance it can overcome.

I

A MAN'S character is only another name for the man himself. It is his true being, his inmost nature; needing time to manifest and perfect it, requiring opportunities to draw it forth, and the operation of habit to strengthen and confirm it. It is not accidental but essential to him, and must be distinguished from all that merely wraps him round or envelops him. It needs to be formed; but the moulding force comes from within. When it develops properly, it follows the example of the lily of the field and grows spontaneously; conforming fully to the laws and conditions of spiritual life. There is no rebellion in the lily against the presence or the action of the light that bathes it, or of the air that permeates it, or of the soil that feeds it. It never spoils its growth by obtrud-

ing its own selfish wishes into the process, or by vainly imagining how much better it could do if it were left to follow out some plan of development of its own, or even by thinking of its own grace or beauty. If it became self-conscious in this way,—if it allowed itself to be perpetually saying, "How very well I am doing! How very beautiful I look!"—its excellence and beauty would instantly disappear. It is put there to grow, and it grows; and thus it becomes the exquisite thing that we know it to be.

But human character, if it is to be genuine and to attain its highest form, must do something precisely similar. Between man and the lily there is, indeed, a vast difference; arising from the possession by the former of consciousness and thought and will. But in this, looked at from the standpoint of the ideal, they are both alike—they should both grow **spontaneously**, according to the laws and principles of their own proper being.

This, I take it, is what Jesus meant when He compared "Solomon in all his glory" to "the lilies of the field," and pointed the contrast to Solomon's disadvantage (St. Matt. vi. 28, 29). Very fine and highly imposing to the ordinary intelligence, no doubt, were the great state and pomp and circumstance with which the Wise King (I question if it were done altogether in his *wisdom*) surrounded himself, and through which he cast a glamour over his contemporaries. His magnificent palace, next in grandeur to the Temple itself; his splendid ivory throne, with its carved lions and its flights of steps and its golden footstool; his prodigious household, with its multifarious wants, and his great retinue of servants; the dainties and the rarities that he fetched for himself from the distant parts of the earth—apes and peacocks, no less than gold and precious

stones, from Ophir, horses and chariots from Egypt, and so forth: all these, of which the Hebrew chronicler gives such a graphic account (1 Kings x.; 2 Chronicles ix.), although they cost enormous labour—"toiling and spinning" incredible—and bespoke immense wealth, were not the man in his best form, but the shadow of the "self" thrust between real greatness and the effort to achieve it. There was no spontaneous development in all this, according to the laws of Solomon's higher nature. And so he showed himself to be far less glorious than the lily of the field; for, **it** was glorious because of the free unfolding of its proper nature, and because it **was** exactly what it seemed to be, but **he** was glorious only through outward adornments and by a false display, and the beauty we remark in him was not his own inherent excellence, but something thrust upon him from without.

II

In order to moral progress, then, there must be spontaneous development—growth **from within** and **living** growth; and the essence of righteous character is unselfishness.

That selfishness is vice and unselfishness is virtue, is the very central teaching of Christianity; enforced, in the New Testament Scriptures, in every variety of form —the subject-matter, in especial, of many of the parables of our Lord, and very prominent in the Epistles of St. Paul and St. John.

In **selfishness**, the individual makes himself the centre of everything, and his own interests the supreme end of existence. He uses other human beings, as well as things, therefore, merely as instruments for his own purposes or means to his own gratification. This is to overturn the very basis of morality and to supplant **self-**

respect, which is the indispensable condition of all virtue, by **self-partiality**, which is the root of all vice. That the individual is to count for one among others, is quite true. He has rights of his own, which must not be swamped in those of society in general, or be superciliously ignored by the majority. But, at the same time, he is nothing in himself, or when cut off from humanity: he is not an isolated, independent unit, self-complete and self-contained, but **a member of a social organism**, with relations to other individuals, and bound to respect their rights and to promote the good of the whole. Yea, his own highest good is realizable only in and through the good of the whole. The race is a unity, and the feeling of brotherhood is the breath of spiritual life. The health and welfare of the organism means the health and welfare of its parts, and each is bound to each by sympathy. This St. Paul frequently expresses in a very striking fashion by likening the Christian community to the human body, and individual Christians to the members of the body (Romans xii. 4, 5; 1 Corinth. xii. 12-31), each efficient only by being part of the body, yet with its own special place and function. Christ has the equally significant figure of a kingdom and its citizens.

But if the individual is essentially social, and his character can properly develop only through generous interest in, and unselfish devotion to, the wellbeing of others, his moral advance is conditioned also by **self-restraint** and, if need be, **self-crucifixion**: he is to find his life by losing it. This means that self-discipline is a stern necessity, keeping well in hand the lower nature "with its affections and lusts," and taking care that liberty shall not degenerate into licence. This is the doctrine of the two selves, so strongly insisted on by St. Paul in *Romans* and elsewhere, but enunciated by Christ with great emphasis early in His ministry.

Virtue means **valour**, and the formation of character demands struggle and ever-watchful resistance of evil. Thus only can hurtful desires be weakened and good resolutions strengthened. Sacrifice is needed, if excellence is to be achieved. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it" (St. Luke ix. 23, 24). Entrance is by "the strait gate," and progress is along "the narrow way"; and "not peace, but a sword" is the first result of devotion to high principle. Moral **beauty** virtue certainly has, but its inmost essence is to be **heroic** and **sublime.**

This being so, it becomes a point of great importance to note the means by which unselfish character, or the command over oneself, develops.

1. First of all, it develops through **life's temptations.** These appeal to man's selfishness, and it is only by overcoming them that character grows stronger, and is more and more firmly established. The forms they assume are manifold, and temptations appeal differently to different temperaments. Three of them are universal, and are represented in the Wilderness temptations of our Lord (St. Matt. iv. 1-11; St. Luke iv. 1-13). First, the need for bread is pressing, and hunger and starvation are ill to bear. Consequently, there is danger lest labour for daily bread should engross too much of our energy and withdraw our attention from higher interests: the appetites, if uncontrolled, may ruin us. Again, vanity or vainglory lies very near us; and, where self is prominent in our affections, nothing can be sweeter than the homage and applause of our fellow-men—even flattery becomes supremely acceptable. Yet, when the tempter

took our Lord to a pinnacle of the temple and showed Him (whether really or ideally makes no difference) the assembled multitudes thronging the courts below, ready to do Him homage, to accept Him as their Saviour and Deliverer, if only He would cast Himself down from that height without receiving hurt,—our Lord knew that this would be only to repeat the mistake of Solomon in all his glory and to spoil His act; and so He replied, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Once again, thirst for power is one of the strongest passions in the human breast—love of supremacy or domination. It has a noble side, and may bespeak a lofty and honourable ambition; but it often assumes an ignoble aspect, and comes in the shape of a very subtle spiritual temptation, —*viz.*, when it tries to persuade a man who is governed by the lust of power that, in aiming at supremacy over his fellows, he is doing so with the purest intentions, only for the purpose that he may be able to further others' interests or to promote the general good. It was an appeal to ambition that the third of the Wilderness temptations made, in the hope that our Lord's burning desire to benefit mankind might, after all, not prove wholly disinterested.

But the temptations of life are as numerous as its trials; and these, again, are as many as the countless diverse circumstances into which any of us may be put. They are particularly those of a man's occupation. Wherever a human soul is, whether in the wilderness or in the busy world, there is a permanent possibility of temptation; for, the root of seduction is within. How temptation works and with what diverse results, are brought out strikingly in the parables of the Kingdom (St. Matt. xiii.).

Under temptations, then, and by means of them, character is to be formed and progress to be made.

Yet, an important distinction has to be drawn. Though we cannot avoid temptations—such as life brings us, in the discharge of our daily duties,—we are **not to make or seek temptations** for ourselves. There are always awful possibilities attaching to them: we are in peril while they last. And so keenly did our Lord Himself feel this that, recollecting His own temptations in the wilderness—which were not self-sought, but into which He was "led" or "driven" by the Spirit,—with the impressions still strong and vivid, and the consciousness no doubt acute of all the momentous issues that depended on His steadfastness, He taught His disciples the petition, "Lead us not into temptation" (St. Matt. vi. 13). That was a reflexion of His own experience; and it is highly significant.

2. But, again, character is formed and spiritual force strengthened by a brave and noble use of it. It is only by **venturing** that fresh power is acquired.

The Seventy disciples (see St. Luke x. 1-20), commissioned only "to heal the sick, and to say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," went beyond the **letter** of their commission and boldly put into practice the **spirit** of it, essaying even "to cast out devils"; and the result was that "even the devils were subject" unto them. This evidence of moral valour and undoubting faith had its reward. For, when the seventy returned "rejoicing" at their success, Jesus, perceiving the worth that was in them, proceeded at once to entrust them with still higher powers. "Behold," He said, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." The law according to which character is formed is always the same: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (St. Matt. xiii. 12; xxv. 29). "Faithful

over a few things" is the condition for being "ruler over many things." Character determines fitness: "To sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared" (St. Matt. xx. 23).

Hence, we can see how character is to be tested. It is to be tested simply by the means whereby we test all power whatever—*viz.*, by the amount of resistance it can overcome. We may test it by the force or by the suddenness of temptation; we may test it by the almost continuous strain that is put upon it by the slowness of life's probation—by what one, speaking pathetically from his own experience, calls "the long years of patient waiting and silent labour, the struggle with listlessness and pain, the loss of time by illness, the hope deferred, the doubt that lays hold of delay"; we may test it by the little worries and disappointments of life; we may test it by the temptation of secrecy in sinning; or, we may test it by the strength upon us of the premium that the world puts upon vice. By these and many similar tests we have a ready means of measuring our moral progress and of ascertaining our deficiencies and defects; and by the same tests we are able also to gauge the character and progress of others.

CHAPTER IX

FAITH AND HOPE

Faith defined and exemplified—Hope defined and exemplified—These two as Christian forces—Motive power of Faith in the formation of Christian character—Motive power of Hope.

Obviously, from what has just been said regarding the formation of character, two operative powers are implicated in the process,—*viz.*, faith and hope.

By **Faith**, speaking generally, is meant confidence or trust. It is belief, indeed, in so far as it presupposes intellectual knowledge of the object or person trusted; but it is, further, unreserved committal of oneself to the trusted thing or person, in the conviction that such thing or person is trustworthy. Mere belief may not lead to trust—it may be simply perception of a truth, without effective acceptance of it: "the devils," St. James says (ii. 19), "believe, *and tremble*." But, whenever belief leads to unwavering reliance, it becomes faith. In this sense, faith is the necessary condition of all enterprise and progress whatsoever. Alike in commerce, in exploration, in scientific research, in philosophical speculation, in ethical effort, and in religion, faith is indispensable. In our daily intercourse one with another, we must trust each other, else we should soon be brought to a standstill. In our reasonings and speculations, in our

arguments and inferences, we must trust reason, otherwise we could not proceed a single step. That Truth *is*, and that it may be reached by us, is a necessary presupposition of our intellectual life. It is a mistaken notion, therefore, that faith is restricted to religion: it permeates the whole of human thought and action.

Hope, on the other hand, is a species of desire, in which are implied at least three things:—(1) wish or longing, (2) a state of suspense and, so, of waiting, and (3) a conviction that, the state of suspense and waiting being over, the thing desired will be attained—this last is expectation. Hope, therefore, has necessarily to do with ideals. Whatever is realizable, or believed to be realizable, but is not yet realized, may become an object of hope; and, as all ideals are of this nature, they plainly fall within its range. Hope is the motive power to continued effort in the face of adverse circumstances and delayed realization; and not only continued, but increased, effort. Without it, energy and enterprise would both be paralyzed: progress or improvement would become impossible. Hope is comfort and encouragement and stimulus and support to us; cheering us in the cloudy and dark day, upholding us in the hour of difficulty or sorrow or disappointment, emboldening us when we are confronted with dangers, and bracing us for facing manfully the future, and meeting it without dismay. All great deeds, all worthy achievements, all that the world has seen of noble action and of heroic conduct, may in great measure be traced to hope. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast"[1]; and thereby civilization is advanced, victories are won, and failure is turned into ultimate success. Hope, like Faith, is far-reaching in its application, and is by no means confined to

[1] Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epistle i.

religion: it is equally necessary in secular, as in sacred, affairs.

If, then, Faith and Hope be thus of general application, what is their distinctive feature as Christian forces? We find it simply in **the sphere** in which they are exercised, and in **the objects** on which they are fixed.

To the Christian, faith is the eye of the soul turned towards things spiritual and divine; giving him perception, and, therefore, assurance, of God's existence and of the eternal verities declared in the Scriptures, and leading him to trust them. The objects of faith are invisible or unseen, in so far as the eye of the body is concerned; but they are as real and perceptible as objects of sight, —only, they are spiritually apprehended. Faith is, in the spiritual world of man's experience, what ordinary vision is in his connexion with external reality. Each is **seeing**; and, in both cases, "seeing is believing."[1]

Now, through this power of spiritual perception and assurance, this trust that the Christian has in the Supreme Being, making consciousness of the Divine Presence with him, and divine interest in him, constant or abiding, moral character progresses towards perfection on the basis of religion, and thereby reaches its greatest stability. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And, as ethical union with God—"fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3) —is, according to Christ's teaching, the highest good or the chief end of man, the believer, being brought through faith into a new relation with God, has fresh stimulus imparted to him, and he imitates God in his life, so that his nature contracts an ever-increasing beauty, inasmuch as imitation of God leads to reflexion of His glory in the imitator.[2] In Old Testament phraseology, he "walks with

[1] See Hebrews xi. i. [2] See 2 Corinth. iii. 18.

God"; and this means that his face is directed towards the righteousness that He delights in, and his back is turned on the wickedness that He hates. He becomes a sharer in God's mind and character (for, "fellowship" means **partnership**), and holiness is his supreme concern. His ideal is, "Holy, for the Lord our God is holy"; "perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48). In this fashion does Christian faith work in the forming and building up of moral character.

But what, now, of Christian Hope? It is centred in the future, and reposes on the word and promises of God. It is concerned with the perfection that is to be, and enables us to feel as though the Second Coming of our Lord, and all that that implies, were already here. It is, as Scripture calls it, "the anchor of the soul" (Hebrews vi. 19), mooring us and keeping us steadfast amid the vicissitudes and storms of life, thereby preserving us both from presumption and from despair.

If we ask **how** Christian Hope works in aiding moral progress and the formation of character, we find that it is precisely by urging on to renewed energy and higher attainment, through presenting to us and keeping steadily before us the vision of future recompense and glory; and, as it reposes on Faith and is inseparable from Love, it is powerful to great things. The hopeful man is the trustful man. He trusts God—trusts His unbounded power and His unbounded mercy and the truthfulness of His promises; and, as he is united to Him, by the deepest gratitude and love, he is "*saved* by hope" (Romans viii. 24). Thus does Hope become a quickening principle of the greatest moral value; creating energy and stimulating to perseverance and continuance in well-doing.

CHAPTER X

HUMILITY

Prominence of this quality in Christian teaching—Definition of it —1. As the opposite of spiritual pride—Interpretation of "poor in spirit"—(*a*) With reference to *knowledge*—Case of the early disciples—(*b*) With reference to *faith*—The early disciples again—Humility means heroism—The blessing on it the same as that on suffering persecution—2. As lowly service of others—Opposed to domination, or the desire of superiority —Contrast of non-Christian and Christian ethics here—The change effected by Christ's Incarnation—Exposition of humility by Christ Himself—Case of Salome and her sons—Place of humility in Christian ethics.

One of the most prominent of the Christian graces is Humility—which, because of its very prominence, needs to be specially considered. How it should occupy a chief place in the Christian teaching, will be apparent as we proceed with the exposition.

By Humility is usually understood the opposite of self-conceit, or of an overweening estimate of one's self-importance. And, no doubt, this is part of the meaning.[1] But Scripture gives it a deeper signification, when it (1) opposes it to self-sufficiency or spiritual pride, and (2) identifies it with lowly service of others and active sympathetic interest in their welfare. Spiritual pride

[1] See the parable of the Marriage Feast (St. Luke xiv. 7-11).

and contempt for others—the two opposites of humility—**always go together**: so that the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican exposed a characteristic trait of human nature, when it was spoken, as a rebuke, to those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought" (St. Luke xviii. 9-14).

1. In the first of the meanings—as opposed to spiritual pride,—Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (St. Matt. v. 3), uses the significant phrase "poor in spirit," instead of humility. This really is an explanation of the term.

What, then, is this "poverty" that is synonymous with humility?

Some read it as though "poor in spirit" were but another name for "poor in purse." **That** is an entire mistake. A man poor in this world's goods—lacking money, pinched in circumstances—may, indeed, be a spiritually rich man; but so, too, may a wealthy, prosperous man. And, while a wealthy, prosperous man may be rich in the treasures of the soul, a poor and socially humble man may be altogether wanting in spirituality and noble-mindedness. The poverty that secures the blessing is poverty **of spirit,** not of purse. Blessedness, as we saw in a previous chapter (Chapter IV.), is a state of the soul, not the mere possession (or absence) of anything outward and material: it is neither money itself nor what money can buy, but an inward condition, in which a man sits loose to the changes and vicissitudes of mere external fortune, and finds himself in right relationship with God, and with himself, and with his fellow-men.

But, before this inward condition can be attained, a man must strip himself of self-sufficiency. This our Lord calls "poverty" of spirit. It is emptying the soul of all high notions of itself, and laying it open unre-

servedly to Divine influences, like the photographer's exposure of the plate in the camera to the passive impressions of external objects.

This aspect of humility has a twofold reference: (*a*) to knowledge, (*b*) to faith.

(*a*) It has reference to **knowledge.**

The knowledge contemplated is of a particular kind. No doubt, humility is, in a sense, a condition of **all** kinds of knowledge; and it is usually the man who knows most that is most humble and most ready to receive new light. On the other hand, it is, for the most part, the self-conceited and ignorant man that is the most opinionative and the least open to instruction. But what is here specially in view is **religious** knowledge—particularly, the distinctive claims and teaching of the Saviour. The Beatitudes were spoken to the early disciples. Now, the early disciples had, in the most open-minded way, submitted themselves to Jesus' influence and enrolled themselves as scholars in His school. They might have done otherwise. They were Jews, not free from Jewish prejudices; and so they might have taken up the position of the Pharisees and Scribes: they might have fallen back upon the Jewish Doctors and pleaded **their** authority against this new Teacher and His doctrines. But, being "poor in spirit," they put themselves, without reserve, into Jesus' hands. And the result was that they daily grew in religious knowledge, and daily increased in religious experiences; until, by the time that Jesus came to depart, they themselves were ready to take their place as His ambassadors, and to go forth into the broad world teaching men with a power that no Jewish Doctor ever acquired, and expounding and enforcing principles that were, before long, to turn the world upside down.

This is the lowly submitting to be taught, which

Jesus elsewhere designates "becoming as little children" (St. Matt. xviii. 3, 4). It is through the hearing ear and the receptive mind that things which are "hidden from the wise and prudent" are "revealed unto babes" (St. Matt. xi. 25).

(*b*) But, secondly, poverty of spirit has reference to **faith.** It required prodigious faith on the part of the early disciples to cast in their lot with Jesus—the humble Galilean, the obscure Carpenter of Nazareth. All their Jewish prejudices, all their national hopes and wishes and expectations, were against it. No one ever thought that the promised Messiah, when He came, would be of this stamp. On the contrary, people conceived Him as a glorious temporal sovereign, leading the armies victoriously against the enemy, wresting the Holy Land from the grasp of the hated Romans, and reigning in greater pomp than Solomon or David, secure against every foe. Yet, these lowly-minded followers broke the fetters of prejudice, and recognized the Divine voice when they heard it. They did not even stumble at His doctrine; but accepted His astounding claims. Faith bore them across the barrier; and attachment to Christ's person produced in them a living trust.

Now, by the greatness and intensity of their faith, they showed themselves already heroes. No timid men could have done what they did. By their very adherence to the Saviour, through evil and through good report, they proved themselves worthy of their position, and gave pledge and promise of great things yet to come.

But this is as much the character of Faith now as then. Faith is always the index of a noble and heroic nature. It takes you into the region of trust: it leads you to anticipate the future and to make a venture. But no base soul, no fearful soul, will do that—not, at any rate, when there are momentous interests at stake. The hero

alone is, strictly speaking, the man of faith; and, if you analyze it deeper, you will find that the hero is but another name for "the poor in spirit."

Hence, the blessing that Jesus pronounces on the seemingly tame and mild class of the humble, or "the poor in spirit," is really a blessing on the noble, the courageous, the heroic—those who are bold for righteousness and undaunted by difficulties and opposition; and the promise that He makes them (namely, "*for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*") is the promise to the chivalrous and patient. Extremes here seem to meet; but that only proves how much of a piece sanctified human nature is, and how significant is our Saviour's singling out humility as the subject of the **first** beatitude—a striking opening to the eight, and the fitting parallel to the **last**, "Blessed are they which are *persecuted* for righteousness' sake: *for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*" (St. Matt. v. 10).

2. Of Humility, in its first sense, then, it may be said, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (St. James iv. 6). What, now, of the other meaning?

If, in the former case, humility looked towards faith, in this latter case, it shows itself as **the handmaid of charity.** It is here opposed to domination or the desire of superiority over our fellow-men—one of the strongest of human passions. Hence, it seems tame and soulless; and, as such, was despised in olden times. In no pagan ethics, whether of the cultured Greek or Roman, or of the less civilized peoples, has humility been accounted a virtue. On the contrary, it has always been regarded as a mark of pusillanimity and weakness—a characteristic of the timid man and the coward. But the Incarnation of Christ has changed all that. From the moment that mankind began to realize that Christ, "being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with

God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Philip. ii. 6-8), Humility leaped from its inferior position, and took its proper place in the forefront of the virtues. In the life of Christ on earth, its true nature became apparent for the first time: it was then seen that it is **the indispensable condition of effective service of others.** Only through stooping can we ourselves be exalted: only thus can we conquer men's wills and promote their higher welfare.

The exposition was given by Christ Himself—partly, when, at the Last Supper, in the upper-room at Jerusalem, He washed His disciples' feet (St. John xiii.); but partly, also, in what He said to His disciples that time Salome requested (St. Matt. xx. 20-28), "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy kingdom." What was it—to revert to this second case—that Jesus then said? He rebuked the want of humility that dictated such a request, and the equal want of humility on the part of the other disciples who were jealously displeased with James and John because of the request, and set one and all of them right on this fundamental point of Christian character. "What!" He said, in effect, "are **you** imitating the heathen—eager to be rulers one over another, like heathen magistrates or heathen princes? **There**, among the heathen, domination, power, is the ruling passion; and a man is accounted great according as he can oppress his fellows and keep them in subjection. But Christian authority is of an entirely different sort. It is not the power of a tyrant over his helpless subjects; it is not the power of superior force, which compels obedience when it is not willingly rendered: it is the

sway that one heart exercises over another, gained by loving service of that other—it is dominion through humility, which is the only effective and lasting dominion,—for, 'whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"

With this exposition before us, there is no difficulty in perceiving the true place of Humility in Christian ethics. It is a fundamental virtue, conditioning all; and Christian character can be formed only on due appreciation of this.

CHAPTER XI

CHARITY

I. Universal brotherhood of mankind—The sentiment discoverable in Judaism—In Buddhism—In Stoicism. II. Distinctive features in Christian teaching here. 1. Love of man for man grounded in man's love for God—Hence the special width of Christian charity—Love for one's enemies—What this means—The place of anger and resentment—Jesus cleansing the Temple, and rebuking hypocrisy—Christian charity combines feeling with doing—Reasons for this combination. (1) The peculiar relation that subsists between emotion and activity exemplified—Butler's law. (2) Power of kindly offices in winning enemies—Contrasted with the power (*a*) of brute force, (*b*) of intellectual ability—Why the meek shall inherit the earth—Men willing to live in unity—What prevents it—The Christian's ethical qualities, according to the Beatitudes, gentle and attractive. 2. The great motive to brotherly affection is Christ's affection for mankind—Power of example here—Nothing mystical in this—Case of friendship—Christ, by His Death, has effected mankind's unity. III. The *measure* of Christian charity—Man's love for man—Man's love for God—The latter supreme, yet not impracticable—Christ's example—The power of a ruling affection—How the matter stands — *Intensity* of affection not incompatible with *permanence.*

I

THE essence of virtue, as we have already seen, is unselfishness; and unselfishness, in one leading form, means devotion to the welfare and higher interests of others. Hence the characteristic teaching of Christianity, giving

a chief place in ethics to Universal Brotherhood, or enthusiasm of humanity. In summing up the duties of man, or summarizing the Ten Commandments, Jesus Himself placed first the necessity of love to God, and next the necessity of love to man; and "on these two commandments," He declared, "hang all the law and the prophets" (St. Matt. xxii. 40). In like manner, in His last discourse to His disciples, He formulated the new commandment: "a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (St. John xiii. 34). St. John is equally explicit, when he says: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for, he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John iv. 20, 21). So, too, St. Paul declares: "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. v. 14); and, not only are his writings throughout concerned with the inculcation of this precept, and the enforcing and exemplifying of it in every variety of way, but also one of the grandest sections (namely, 1 Corinthians xiii.) is devoted to brotherly affection, or the brotherhood of mankind, or, as it is most frequently denominated, Charity. Charity, indeed, is what St. James calls it, "the royal law" (ii. 8), and "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (i. 25): it is the sum and kernel of the Christian gospel.

No doubt, the sentiment of human brotherhood was not discovered for the first time by Christianity. Comparatively narrow as the Jewish faith was—meant exclusively for the seed of Abraham and those who should become such by adoption or conversion,—it could not, as time wore on and the events of Providence threw

light on the divine purposes, continue in one stay; and, not unfrequently, before the eye of Hebrew prophet or of psalmist there arose the vision of a universal kingdom of righteousness—of a time when God's way should be known upon **earth** and His saving health among **all** nations. So, in India, long before the advent of Christianity, **Buddha** had founded his ethical system upon the very doctrine of common brotherhood, and extolled Charity in terms almost as vivid as those of St. Paul. "Liberality, courtesy, kindliness, and unselfishness," he said, "these are to the world what the linchpin is to the rolling chariot"—in other words, they keep the world in its course, as the linchpin does the chariot-wheel, and prevents its inhabitants from being hurled headlong to destruction. While, once more, in pagan Greece and Rome, **the Stoics** owed their existence as a distinct philosophical sect to their deep appreciation of, and intense insistence upon, the doctrine that men are the offspring of God, that each man is a citizen of the world, and that "we are made for co-operation, like the feet, the hands, the eyelids, the upper and the lower rows of teeth," "for, what is not good for the swarm is not good for the bee"—a doctrine that succeeded, practically, in breaking down the distinctions of caste among the Stoics, putting Epictetus, the lame Phrygian slave, on a level with Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor, and enabling Aurelius himself to work steadfastly towards the realization of his own ideal,—"the conception of an equal commonwealth, based on equality of right and equality of speech, and of imperial rule respecting, first and foremost, the liberty of the subject" (*Meditations*, i. 14).[1] To the Stoic, as to St. Paul,

[1] By far the most brilliant translation of the *Meditations* is that which was recently put out by Principal Gerald H. Rendall, under the title *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus to Himself*, and published by Macmillan and Co. Ltd.

humanity was more than a collection of human beings —it was an organism, like the body, whose parts are members in living union with the whole; and humane offices of man to man were more than acts of emotionless duty—they were the promptings of sympathy and love.[1]

But, for all this, the Christian enthusiasm of humanity is unique, and it is characterized by these two particulars:—(1) that it grounds man's love for man in his love for God, and (2) that the great motive for brotherly affection is Jesus' affection for mankind.

II

Let us look at each of these two peculiarities in turn.

1. First, the love of man for man is **grounded in the love of man for God**: "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John iv. 21).

We begin at the wrong end, when we begin with ourselves. It is not "Love your brother, then love God"; it is "Love God, then love your brother." The first impulse must come **from above**: the regenerating power must descend, not ascend. Before we can properly reverence the human soul we must learn to reverence that in it which is worthy of reverence; and that in it which is worthy of reverence is "the image of God." If God were not Himself worthy of reverence, His image in man's soul could be no sacred thing to us. But just because God is the highest object of reverence, and demands all the homage that we can render Him, **therefore** man, "made after the similitude of God" (James iii. 19), claims respect at our hands, and is

[1] Whether this doctrine was logically consistent with all the other parts of the Stoical teaching in Ethics, is not here the question.

entitled to "courtesy." Here, according to Scripture, is the true and permanent bond of brotherly union,—*viz.*, the Fatherhood of God.

Hence **the special width of Christian charity.** It must not be confined (any more than the Father's goodness is confined) to a section of mankind, or to friends alone, but must extend to enemies as well, and to the whole human race. We are to imitate, to the utmost of our power, the generosity and beneficence of the Supreme, who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (St. Matt. v. 45). Jesus put it in the most striking form, when He said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (St. Matt. v. 44). This demands of us more than what we should naturally be inclined to give. Love begets love, and every one by nature is disposed to love those that love him. The reciprocation here arises unbidden in our breasts—it is instinctive and spontaneous. But no such instinctive and spontaneous love can there be towards an enemy: on the contrary, we instinctively and spontaneously **hate** enemies. Yet, Jesus requires us to suppress this instinctive and spontaneous hatred, and to replace it by love; and this love, as I interpret it, can alone be gained by strenuous resistance of every prompting to retaliation and revenge, and by practising the opposing virtues—by forgiving injuries, by foregoing retribution, by surrendering opportunities of paying back offences, and by seizing opportunities of requiting evil with good. By "love your enemies," I understand, "Resist every solicitation to hate them; let not their unworthiness bring you down into a mean and narrow disposition; expel from your soul every evil and uncharitable thought regarding them; exercise towards

them a forgiving spirit; and never allow yourself to wish them or to do them ill."

This does not, however, mean that there is no place for anger, or even for a certain resentment, in our constitution. The injunction forbids anger, when anger becomes in us a brooding over of injuries received, a cherishing and fanning of the desire for vengeance; and it forbids resentment, when resentment is a settled and deliberate purpose to retaliate—a firm determination to pay back the offender whenever the occasion offers. But there is **an anger that is just**, and **a resentment that is pure and lawful.** There is such a thing as "righteous indignation"; and St. Paul has said to us, "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Ephesians iv. 26). We are helped in understanding the situation by Jesus' own example; for, Jesus' life is the best commentary on His teaching. We know what He once did in the Temple (St. John ii. 13-16); how, when He saw the worldly plying their business there, He "made a scourge of small cords and drove them all out," He "overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." We know also Jesus' stern indignation against hypocrisy, and His fierce denunciation of the hypocrites (see, for example, St. Matt. xxiii.). There is a justifiable anger and a justifiable resentment; for, it is right to abhor, and to give expression to our abhorrence of, injury and injustice, cruelty, impiety, and wrong. Wrong is wrong, by whomsoever done, and cries for punishment, whether the wrong be inflicted on others or on ourselves. We are not only allowed, but required, to set ourselves against iniquity, and sternly to condemn it. We must not pass by our enemy's sins, any more than we pass by

our own sins or the sins of our friends; neither are we to deal with him more leniently than we should with ourselves or with our neighbours. What we are forbidden is, to delight in seeing an enemy suffering, or to introduce into our judgment of his conduct any personal consideration or feeling—the feeling of offended dignity or of wounded pride, the consideration that we ourselves are the party injured. We are to avoid all malicious pleasure and selfish satisfaction in the matter, and to act here, as elsewhere, upon the principle, Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.

This being so, we can easily see how Christian charity should be a combination of feeling and doing,—of emotion and action. We must both be well disposed towards others and ready to serve them. The grace of charity must be manifested in works: it naturally takes outward form, and embodies itself in kindly deeds and philanthropic institutions.

For this striking combination, there are deep reasons.

(1) In the first place, the **relation between feeling and activity is a very peculiar one.** The more we give ourselves over to mere feeling, the less disposed to action do we become; whereas, the more we accustom ourselves to act upon emotion, the more does our ability or tendency to act increase. Take an example. On our first sight of a person in distress, we are, no doubt, deeply moved: our sensibility or feeling is then very strong. But just in proportion as we give way to this mere feeling —to the mere sentiment of compassion—is our inability and indisposition to render active help: we sit, as it were, paralyzed, being absorbed in emotion. But now let us habituate ourselves to sights of distress, let us (like the sick-nurse and the doctor) be brought into daily contact with suffering, while all the time we are

called upon to render prompt assistance; and what happens? Repeated experience of suffering does, to some degree, blunt the acuteness of our sensibility; but then there comes, instead of it, the active habit of relieving —the instinctive rising up to help. It is a law, which the most philosophical of English divines (Bishop Butler) has turned to admirable account,[1] that "passive impressions by being repeated grow weaker," whereas "practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts"; and "active principles, at the very time that they are less lively in perception than they were, are somehow wrought more thoroughly into the temper and character, and become more effectual in influencing our practice."

Thus, Christian charity, in order to be effective, must be active as well as emotional: a bare sentiment, ministering to inactivity, would defeat the end in view.

But (2), secondly, the combination of feeling and activity is here necessary for another reason,—*viz.*, because of **the power that kindly offices**, combined with good feeling, have in winning and cementing mankind, and, in especial, of gaining a hostile brother. The efficacy of a soft answer to turn away wrath is proverbial; and requiting evil with good is equally potent. In the struggle for existence, indeed, physical force might be supposed to be the ruling factor; and, if not that, then intellectual ingenuity, laying hold on opportunity and turning its resources to practical account. And there can be no question that there have been times when brute force has ruled in the earth, and other times when intellectual ability has exercised the supremacy. Brute force is power; and knowledge, too, is power. But brute force is power only as against brute force. You may, by sheer superior muscle, seize hold of a man, and coerce him to

[1] See *The Analogy of Religion*, Part I. chap. v.

your will—you may load him with chains or confine him under bolt and bar. But though, for the moment, you have quieted him, you have not thereby subdued him. On the contrary, you have embittered him in his enmity; and, at the earliest moment, he will assert his power against you, and procure your ruin, if he can. Force of arms or superior might may beat down or vanquish an opponent; but Love alone can subdue him. He may **surrender** under strong compulsion, when he cannot help himself, being overpowered; but he will **submit** only when you reach his heart and gain his will. Neither does mental cleverness, or intellectual capacity, necessarily bring unity, or produce the highest permanent results. Strife and division, instead of concord and peace, often follow in its train. What alone has unity as its necessary consequence is meekness: it is the softer virtues, and these when they are joined to piety or are raised to divine graces. "Everything," says Epictetus, "has two handles, the one by which it may be carried, the other by which it may not. If your brother acts unjustly, do not lay hold of the act by that handle wherein he acts unjustly, for this is the handle which cannot be carried; but lay hold of the other,—that he is your brother, that he was nurtured with you,—and you will lay hold of the thing by that handle by which it can be carried" (*Encheiridion*, xliii.).

Hence, we perceive the propriety of the promise that "the meek shall inherit the earth." **Who else should?** The amiable virtues, above all things, have attractive power in them; and the great force that binds men together is active benevolence. And men, as a rule, wish to be bound together,—they desire to live in unity. No doubt, some people are so constituted as to delight in quarrels for quarrels' sake; but these are exceptional and abnormal. You have only to observe how glad former

enemies are to be reconciled, if one can devise some method of doing it without too greatly humiliating either party, and to notice the readiness that people show to extend forgiveness to an offending brother when he is really penitent and asks forgiveness,—you have only to notice this, to be convinced that unity and goodwill are the true foundation of man's nature, and that love, not hate, lies at the root of his being. What creates the difficulty is **the intervention of selfishness and self-conceit.** It is not because I naturally hate my fellow-man, or really wish to quarrel with him, that I harbour ill-will and a grudge against him when he has offended me, but because my vanity is touched,—I am injured in my self-importance. Yet, this intervention of self-conceit or self-importance is a very obstinate fact, rendering it hard to get a reconciliation effected. I am not happy in being at feud with my neighbour, I am even anxious to find a means of regaining his affection; but I cannot make advances, and wait till advances are made to me, because my vanity is hurt. He, in like manner, is unhappy in his alienation, and would gladly welcome a way out of the difficulty, if only he could pocket his pride, or lay aside his overestimate of self, or over-sensitiveness on the side of personal dignity. It is the office of charity to remove this over-sensitiveness to self-importance from the offended parties, and thereby to allow the flow of mutual affection to resume its proper channel. But, as charity is the possession of the meek man, of the generous man, of the humble man, of the long-suffering, patient, and forbearing man, **his** is the type of character which best represents the Father, with His all-embracing Love and His generosity, even to the unthankful and the prodigal (St. Luke xv. 11-32). On this account, the distinctive ethical qualities of Christ's disciple, as laid down in the Beatitudes (St. Matt. v. 3-12), are all of **the gentle and**

attractive kind — unaggressive, unassuming, winning. Hence, many of them are passive. Humility, or poverty of spirit, sorrow, meekness, aspiration, mercifulness, purity of heart,—all these point to a state or condition of the soul, and suggest what the Christian in his inmost nature **is**, rather than what he habitually **does**. But after these comes peace-making, which shows him on his distinctively active or energetic side; the spirit he has cultivated, the disposition he has acquired, now working itself out in practice: while, the last of the Beatitudes represents him as passively **enduring**, for righteousness sake. It is all on the line of permanent unity: **meekness is power**. And the highest claim that Jesus Himself made was grounded on this same cementing quality: "Come unto Me," He said, "all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for *I am meek and lowly in heart:* and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (St. Matt. xi. 28-30).

2. But, next, the great motive to brotherly affection is **Jesus' affection for mankind**—an affection manifested in the highest self-denying service. "This is My commandment," He said, "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (St. John xv. 12, 13).

There is no doubt that the call to universal goodwill and to the bearing of one another's burdens, is a very high one; demanding the sacrifice of much that is dear to us, and requiring us to develop a side of our nature that is only too apt to be subordinated. It is a call to the higher life; and, before we can respond to it, we need to see the higher life lived, to have it set before us in con-

crete shape or form. In ethics, as elsewhere, the most effective teaching is by example; and, in the case of Charity, in particular,—whether we take charity as liberality of view, or as breadth of compassion, or as never-failing beneficence,—precept can go but a short way. It is not the knowledge of what generosity means that is wanting to us, so much as the will to do what is generous; and this will can best be stimulated by touching the springs of emotion through the manifestation of generosity in another.

Hence the power of Jesus' earthly life and work. The sight of goodness excites the spectator to goodness: the thought of Christ's disinterested affection for mankind—affection that led to the sublimest self-sacrifice, going the length even of dying on the Cross for sinners—quickens the dormant energies of our souls, and arouses us, first, to admiration, next, to gratitude, and, then, to self-surrender. That is how perception of the Saviour's love in man's redemption works in those who realize it. And there is nothing mystical or unintelligible about this: it is precisely similar to what happens, in a lower plane, every day. We know what ordinary friendship can do. Given a friend of stronger will, or of robuster intellect, or of purer character than our own, and inevitably we submit ourselves to his guidance. He becomes to us "a second self"; so that we assimilate his thoughts, accept his ways, and identify ourselves with his purposes and ends. So with our devotion to Christ. Imitation, to the extent of our ability, is the necessary consequence of it. And, as the whole of Christ's work was directed towards promoting the welfare of mankind, this becomes the ruling object of our lives also. Our enthusiasm of humanity is elicited and fanned by His, and our lives are moulded on Him as our model. He becomes to us both stimulus and pattern; so that His commandment is a

living source of inspiration: "this is My commandment, that ye love one another, *even as I have loved you.*"

But there is something more than even this in Christ's affection for humanity. **His Death**—which is the outcome of His affection—**has effected mankind's unity.** As it has united us to God as to our Father, so it has united us to one another by making us dependent on one and the same Lord and Saviour, and sharers in common promises and hopes and aspirations. As St. Paul puts it: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. iv. 4-6). Charity finds here its deepest ground: "for ye are **all one** in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

III

We have just seen the relation that man's love to God bears to man's love to man—the second is founded on the first. What, now, is the **measure** of each of these two loves?

One's love to man is to be measured by one's affection for oneself. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour **as thyself**" —to that extent, no more, no less, not otherwise. That is intelligible enough, and needs no special comment: it follows from the fact of the solidarity of the race, and of men's sharing in a common salvation. But one's love to God must go beyond this—it must be **with the entire being** and **in unrestricted quantity**: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (St. Mark xii. 30).

Now, **is not this visionary and impracticable?** Is

such intensity of love possible? and, if it were possible, could it last?

That **it is possible**, is proved by the fact that it has been achieved. Christ achieved it; and it has been achieved also by His disciples. Every one who really submits himself to it finds that it calls forth the energies of his whole being, that it will not rest till it has stretched to the utmost his capacities and powers, laying under contribution everything that is in him, so permeating and quickening him that all besides shall be subdued, and God shall be all in all.

Nor is this, in any way, strange. Do we not see that **any** affection, when it gains the ascendency, will do something precisely similar? Do we not find other affections actually doing it? The man whose prevailing passion is the love of power, or the love of money, or the love of fame, never rests contented at any one stage, but finds his ruling passion "always putting him upon providing new gratifications for it." There is this great difference, however, that such a passion has illimitable graspingness about it, which oversteps its natural boundary, and so cannot secure final happiness; whereas, the more insatiable we are in loving God (seeing there is no overstepping of boundary here), "the more amiable and blessed" do we become.

The matter, then, stands thus:—We must be ruled by something; there must be a prevailing love of some kind in our hearts. The question comes to be, Shall it be love of God, or love of men, or love of self? It must be one of these: it cannot be them all. For, although all three loves may exist in one and the same heart, they cannot all rule there. One alone can reign supreme; and whichever reigns supreme gives the tone to the character and determines its state.

But can intense affection **last**? Why should it not?

Permanence and intensity are not opposites—they are not incompatible. On the contrary, the intenser an affection, the deeper it is; and, therefore, it abides. What soon comes to an end is, not intensity of affection, but mere religious excitement; and this vanishes, because it is only a play on the nerves. Love to God is no excitement—as we see in the calm and unimpassioned life of Jesus,—but a deep and strong emotion; and, because deep and strong, it is durable, and, the more enduring, the deeper and stronger it is.

SECTION D

PRACTICAL ETHICS

CHAPTER XII

RESULTS OF CHARITY

1. Christian charity has abolished national and racial exclusiveness—Meaning of this—Ancient Egypt—Greece and Rome—The Jews—2. Has abolished slavery—The Greek idea of slavery—The Jewish idea—Pharaoh and the Egyptian taskmasters—Slavery defined—St. Paul's dealings with Philemon in relation to Onesimus—Christianity effecting its end by the fervour of Christian love, and not by political revolution—3. Has abolished caste and class distinctions—The ground of it, the worth and dignity of the human soul—Christ a King, and His subjects helpers in the propagation of righteousness—4. Has elevated women—The status of women in ancient times and in modern heathen lands—Christianity's revolution exemplified—5. Has intensified sympathy with the weak and the oppressed—Power of Jesus' example—Philanthropic movements and institutions—6. Extends sympathy to the lower animals—Why no special injunction in New Testament regarding treatment of the brutes.

THE practical results of the realization of the brotherhood of mankind have been manifold, and are visible in all the Christian's relations in life—family relations, social relations, etc. To go through them in any adequate fashion would require a large volume ; for, it would be to classify

and expound Christian duties in their whole range and application. The bearings of Christianity on modern problems alone—*e.g.*, on the labour question—would do more than tax the space at our command. All that can here be done is to glance at several of the more conspicuous of the results, so as to bring out features distinctive of Christian ethics.

1. And, first of all, Christian charity **abolishes national and racial exclusiveness**: "there is not Jew and Greek" (Gal. iii. 28).

By this, of course, is not meant that the natural accidents of birth and nationality are done away with, neither is it meant that patriotism or love of country is extinguished; but the meaning is, that these are now regarded as no obstacle to mankind's common brotherhood and fellowship, and no excuse for one nation or people tyrannizing over or oppressing another.

Now, this idea of a universal brotherhood among races was scarcely even dreamt of in antiquity. We have already seen that its existence as a philosophical doctrine was long prior to the appearance of Christianity; but it was unknown or unheeded by states and statesmen: it had little or no practical effect on the world at large. Nay, the very highest and most civilized of ancient states were founded on the entirely opposite principle. Take ancient Egypt—one of the most advanced and cultured of early monarchies. Its attitude towards foreigners was exactly that exhibited towards Israel; and a perfect revelation is contained in the single sentence, "The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is *an abomination unto the Egyptians*" (Genesis xliii. 32). Again, take ancient Greece and Rome. Foreigners were to both *barbarians;* and "barbarian" was a term significant of inferiority and contempt.

Barbarian was every one, in a Roman's eye, who was not Roman; and whosoever was not Greek was, to the Greek, barbarian. To Egyptian, Greek, and Roman alike, the fact of national and racial distinctions was an insuperable barrier to the practical recognition of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Even to the Jew, the idea of a universal brotherhood was scarcely more than an idea. It was implicitly contained, indeed, in Judaism, and prophet and psalmist had occasional vision of it; but it was never practically worked out, or explicitly developed. On the contrary, national exclusiveness was the very characteristic of the Hebrews; and it was only by maintaining themselves as a separate people, altogether isolated from "the Gentiles," that they were able to preserve their identity. Now, what was thus impossible to the ancients—what was but a dream of the Greek philosophers or a vision of the Jewish prophets—that Christianity has so far embodied in fact. In the widest sense of all, it has broken down "the middle wall of partition," and, through infusing into men a feeling of common brotherhood and inspiring them with common sympathy, has rendered possible and is hastening on a "federation of the world."

2. But, secondly, through its teaching of charity, Christianity has **abolished slavery**: "there is not bond and free" (Gal. iii. 28).

The universality of slavery in ancient times is a fact of history. Even among the most enlightened nations of antiquity, it was a regular institution; and it is a highly significant and suggestive circumstance that the very wisest of the ancient Greeks defended it and regarded it as a necessity; and, when they set themselves, as Plato did, to form in imagination an Ideal Republic—to conceive a best possible state of things,—they uniformly placed in this Ideal Commonwealth—in this

heaven upon earth (for, so it was)—their race of slaves, still toiling away and drudging for behoof of others, retaining their inferiority (which was supposed to be fixed by an immutable law of nature), and unfit for the higher citizenship.[1] Even the Jews permitted and practised slavery, although the Mosaic code greatly mitigated the servile condition, and was specially humane towards the unfortunate Jew, who, because of poverty or for other reason, should sell himself as bondman to a brother Jew, instituting, for his sake, the Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee, and laying down many ameliorating ordinances. The institution of the Sabbath, too, as a day of weekly rest, had for one of its reasons, humanity to the servile class: "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy v. 14, 15). This was a marked improvement over anything to be found at the time among other peoples. Take Eastern lands. We see the character of the Oriental slave-driver and the nature of his exactions in the taskmasters of Pharaoh and the work of the Israelites in their Egyptian bondage. Take the West; and the miserable lot of the western slave, in days of old, is familiar to us in the histories of Greece and Rome.

But **slavery** itself: **what does it really mean?** It means that there is a radical and insurmountable differ-

[1] In the *Politics*, Aristotle deliberately enunciates and elaborates the theory that there are men who are by nature slaves, so that slavery becomes a necessity and the institution of it is just. He even defends the undertaking of war with a view to the acquisition of slaves. In the *Ethics*, he refuses to admit that happiness, any more than virtue, can belong to a slave; and, *there* too, as in the *Politics*, he excludes slaves from a share in the social life of a citizen. Some ancient Greek thinkers, however (*e.g.*, Alcidamas of Elea), were more liberal, and argued against slavery on the ground of man's natural rights.

ence between the souls of men; that there is a class of human beings incapable of intellectual and moral elevation, made to serve, but unfit to govern—beings with duties to perform, but possessing no rights. A slave, as Aristotle defined him, is "a living implement"—a mere part of a man's possessions, like his cattle and his horses and his tools; no friend or brother, but a "thing" included in the class of "goods and chattels," and to be treated and disposed of precisely as his owner pleased.

This is a very unworthy and degrading view of man to take; and the spirit of Christianity is entirely against it. St. Paul gives expression to the Christian consciousness in his dealings with Philemon. When he received Onesimus, Philemon's runaway and worthless, if not also dishonest, slave, and, having won him to the Christian faith and clasped him to his bosom, sent him back to his master with words of warm commendation and the urgent request for forgiveness and generous treatment, he showed in deed the true mind of the Saviour, and preached by example to his own and to future generations. That was the death-knell of slavery, when he wrote (see the *Epistle to Philemon*): "I beseech thee for my son [or child] Onesimus . . . that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, **a brother beloved**, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord." No formal precept against slavery is there, indeed, in the Scriptures; but (which is far better) the institution is condemned by the ground-principle of Christianity—the worth of the individual soul in the sight of God; by the loving, gentle, and humane principles that the Gospel everywhere inculcates; by the common participation—of high-born and slave alike—in baptism; by the unrestricted fellowship of all at the same Holy Table; and, above all, by "the sweet reason-

ableness" that was in Christ Himself, and which He requires of all His followers. Had Christianity set itself in open opposition to this institution, which, in Christ's days, was universally established, it would have assumed the function of a mere **political** system, and so would inevitably have failed of its design. But just because it avoided the political pitfall, refusing to call upon slaves in general to rise in armed rebellion against their masters, **therefore**, has it been powerful to the opening of the prison doors and the removal of the fetters. It melted the hearts of masters "by the fervour of Christian love, and so penetrated society with the principles of the Gospel that emancipation became a necessity." It was thus that it "brake the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder" (Ps. cvii. 16). The effect was not long in showing itself; and, under the early Christian Emperors (beginning, at any rate, with Constantine), decrees were passed ameliorating the condition of the slave, recognizing his worth and dignity as a man, and facilitating his emancipation.[1] The result has been the same wherever Christianity has been accepted by a State. After its introduction into England, the kings forbade men to sell slaves out of the country "that those souls perish not that Christ bought with His own life."

3. But what Christianity has done in this way with slavery, it has done also, and is still doing, with reference to **caste and class distinctions**.

I do not, of course, mean that it has abolished the differences between the rich and the poor, between the high-born and the low-born, between the peer and the peasant. **That** it has not done, and it never intended to do it. These are outward earthly differences that society demands; but they have in themselves no intrinsic

[1] For the history of the subject, see the article on "Slavery" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

value. What I mean is, that these differences have been shown to count for nothing in the eye of God. A man is no nearer perfection for belonging to the caste of priest, for instance, than for being a layman; noble birth is in itself no recommendation to the Divine favour, neither is there any merit in humble origin. When Jesus pronounced the blessing on the poor, it was on the poor "*in spirit*"; and, when grieved at the choice of the rich young man "who made the great refusal," He did not condemn riches in themselves, He simply said, "How hard is it for them *that trust in* riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!" (St. Mark x. 24).

It is a pagan notion that God is a respecter of persons. He has His priests (so the heathen conceive) who, whatever be their personal or private character, are holy and acceptable to Him because of their office. He has His favoured nations; and these may transgress or obey His law: in neither case will He desert them. He has His favourite cities and His favourite families; and to belong to these is special privilege and gain. Riches are the consequence of the Divine favour; poverty is the sign of the Divine displeasure. Against all this, Christianity protests, and, locating worth only in the individual soul, sweeps away the false pretensions of those who claim merit for what is merely external and adventitious, and shows that men are in the truest sense equal—each is a human soul with the stamp of the Creator on him, and each is to be estimated only according to what he himself is.

Most strikingly is this seen to hold when we remember that Christ came claiming to be a King and aimed at establishing a kingdom on the earth; making His followers thereby subjects and also helpers in the propagation of righteousness. Thus is the whole of one's life ennobled, and workman and work alike swept within the circle of Jesus' influence and care. The pulse of the Christian

beats strong when it beats in unison with that of the whole Christian community; and our smallest friendly services one to another, if lovingly rendered, are sanctified by the thought, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me" (St. Matt. xxv. 40).

4. Again, Christianity is distinguished by its noble conception of women—by its insisting on **the dignity of womanhood**: "there is not male and female" (Gal. iii. 28).

Under ancient pagan systems, philosophical and political alike, woman was invariably treated as man's inferior, and, frequently, as little better than a slave. It is the same at the present day in India and Africa and other heathen lands. What with the unrestrained control of parents over daughters and of husbands over wives, leading, in many cases, to harsh and inhuman treatment; what with polygamy and all its attendant evils; what with exclusion of women from the confidence of men, and the assigning to them of very menial duties,—woman's life in heathen countries is one of great inferiority and strict subordination—pitiable in many respects, enviable in few.

Conspicuous among the characteristics of Christianity is the contrast it presents to this. In the Christian code, for the first time, due place has been given to woman as **man's helpmeet.** Whether as daughter, mother, wife, or widow, she is valued and esteemed; her husband is commanded to give her honour as unto the weaker vessel, and to remember that she is the heir with him of the grace of life (1 Peter iii. 7); her influence in the family, in society, in the church, gets ample scope and is fully appreciated. To Christianity is owing the chivalry that ennobles modern civilization. To it, too, is due the recognition of the sanctity of marriage—based

upon the fact of its divine institution (St. Matt. xix. 3-12), and of its serving as a symbol of the mystical union between Christ and the church, and carrying in its train female fidelity, the purity of home-relationships, and all the blessings of pure family life (Eph. v. 22-33). And to Christianity, directly or indirectly, are owing both the revelation of woman's distinctive capabilities and the opportunities for developing them. The true dignity and beauty of womanhood are shown in the piety and love of Martha and Mary in the home at Bethany (St. John xi.); in the picturesque band of women—"Mary called Magdalene, . . . and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others" (St. Luke viii. 3)—who ministered to Jesus of their substance; in the daughters of Jerusalem following the Saviour to His crucifixion and weeping around the Cross of Calvary (St. Luke xxiii. 28; St. John xix. 25); in the Marys and Salome hastening to the sepulchre with their spices and their preparations, "that they might anoint Him" (St. Mark xvi. 1): and in these we have examples of female worth that are only part of a vast series extending in a line unbroken down to the present day. If Christianity has elevated woman, it has also rendered possible the full manifestation and unfolding of her excellences and graces.

5. But Christianity has, further, **intensified men's sympathy** with the weak, the poor, the down-trodden, and the oppressed.

Jesus' great love and tenderness for children,[1] His

[1] Not only did He take them up in His arms and bless them (St. Mark x. 13-16), not only did He set them forth, in their humility, as a type of the Christian (St. Matt. xviii. 3, 4); but He said, in words of deep solemnity, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 10). He said also,—"And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me: but whoso shall cause one of these little ones which

sympathy with the fallen and the condemned, His condescension to a life of poverty and to the work of a carpenter at Nazareth—this alone was sufficient to revolutionize people's estimate of what has real value and their notions of duty one to another. It was now seen that there is a sacredness in the helplessness of infancy and childhood,[1] and a call upon us for gentle treatment of all who are in need of help; that poverty is not a sin, nor honest labour a disgrace; and that even gross faults and failings render the delinquents objects of tender solicitude and should draw forth our compassion, instead of repelling us. Hospitals, Lunatic Asylums, Homes for Orphans and the like, philanthropic institutions, ministering to human wants of every kind and form, abolition of savage punishments for crime, too, are but the necessary and inevitable outcome of living Christian charity. The moment that the sympathetic heart of Jesus went forth to the publican and the harlot,—hating sin but pitying the sinner,—a new era began for the downcast and the despised.

6. Nor does Christian charity, with its practical beneficence, content itself with human beings: it extends its interests, also, **to the sentient and suffering brutes.**

It has often been objected to Christianity that, in the New Testament, there is no special injunction regarding the treatment of the lower animals; and, in this respect, its ethics is declared to be inferior to that of many other religious systems. But the objection is misplaced. Certainly, the New Testament does not lay down any formal rule regarding man's relation to the brute creation. But, then, Christianity (as we saw in Chap. II.) deals with principles, not with rules; and the principles

believe in me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea" (St. Matt. xviii. 6).

[1] A condemnation, therefore, of infanticide.

it enunciates regarding humane conduct are quite ample enough to cover the lower animals as well as men. The whole spirit of Christianity is utterly antagonistic to ill-treating the dumb creatures. This is answer sufficient. But, further, it must never be forgotten that Christianity was grafted upon Judaism, and took over from it, among other things, the doctrine that "the righteous man is merciful to his beast." In this respect, as in others, Jesus came "not to destroy, but to fulfil." While, still again, Jesus' teaching that the fowls of the air, specifically "the sparrows," are under the special care and providence of God (St. Matt. vi. 26; x. 29) almost necessitated kindly interest in the lower creatures, seeing that the God who cares for man is the same that cares for other living beings—His "tender mercies are over all His works."[1]

[1] For the humane and kindly treatment of the lower animals among the ancient Greeks, see Plutarch's *Lives*, under the heading "Cato the Censor." In Eastern lands, kindness to the brute creation has often been stimulated by the doctrine of Metempsychosis or Transmigration of souls.

CHAPTER XIII

JUDGING

Difficulties of the task—Yet, the task necessary; and why—Obstacles to correct moral judgment—I. **Self-judgment**—Distorting causes—1. Custom—Familiarity blunts perception—2. Self-partiality—Nature and examples of—3. Accepting a wrong standard of judgment—Inducements to—4. Complexity and subtlety of sin—(*a*) Its complexity and depth—(*b*) Its power of transforming itself—(*c*) Its power of concealment—II. **Judging others**—Object of—Spirit in which it should be done—Meaning of St. Matt. vii. 1—Distorting causes—1. Tendency to judge superficially—Whence it arises—Case of David—General maxim—2. Want of sympathy—Difficulty of realizing the situation and temptations of another; and whence it arises—Lamentable results—3. Self-partiality—Malicious delight in finding faults in others—Intervention of jealousy and envy, with the consequences—4. Personal attachment—May lead to partiality—Necessity of chivalrous behaviour towards friends—5. Prejudice—Its working exemplified—6. Passion—Its operation.

It is not an easy matter fairly and correctly to estimate human character. Character is such a very complex thing, it is such a mixture of subtle and apparently conflicting forces, that to see it on all sides and to place the various parts of it in just relation is a task of enormous difficulty.

Yet, it is a task from which we dare not shrink. For, we are called upon to be judges—judges of ourselves,

judges of others. By judging others is not, of course, meant censoriousness, or flippant criticism of others (such as the young and inexperienced frequently pass unabashed on their experienced elders), but enlightened **moral** judging—bringing the conduct of others, just as one brings one's own conduct, to the test of the law of righteousness, and approving or disapproving, praising or condemning, it accordingly. That kind of judging is laid upon us by the very fact that we are social beings; it is laid upon us, in an especial manner, by Christianity, which regards its adherents as responsible in a certain measure for each other's conduct, and for the health and welfare of the general body: "for, we who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Romans xii. 5). Self-judging is an ethical necessity, for one's own good; judging of others is indispensable for their good and for the good of the whole. Only thus can a high and a vigorous moral tone be maintained, and apathy and disaster avoided; "for," as St. Paul told the lethargic and degenerating Corinthians, "if we judged ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinth. xi. 31).

What, then, are the obstacles to correct moral judgment—of oneself and of others? That is a very important question for Christian ethics on its practical side.

I. Self-judgment

The causes that distort our moral judgments in reference to self are numerous—of which, the following are leading examples.

1. First, **Custom.**

The spiritual or moral atmosphere in which men live is a tainted one. Sin is within us and around us; and many reprehensible habits, through our being

familiar with them, and finding them commonly practised, fail to strike us in their true nature. What everybody does seems strange to nobody; and what passes unreproved in general society is likely enough to pass unreproved altogether. Hence, even conscientious people run the risk of harbouring evil. What we are accustomed to, escapes our special notice; and we can only judge ourselves aright, if we keep watch on custom, and "by reason of use have our senses [our moral sense] exercised to discern good and evil" (Hebrews v. 14).

2. A second obstacle is **self-partiality.**

Naturally enough, a man's interest centres first in himself,—if for no other reason, then for this, that self is nearer to him than anything besides can be. But, in the eye of reason, oneself is not of more importance than any other self. The mere fact that I am specially dear to myself is no just reason why I should be dealt with more tenderly or more leniently than others.

Yet, who does not show partiality in dealing with himself? There is some sin dear to a man, which, if it occurred in any one else, he would be the first and the loudest to condemn; but, seeing it is his own sin, it somehow or other changes its whole aspect—its ugliness and baseness disappear. On the weakness of some neighbour, I have been unsparing; but let that weakness develop in myself, and immediately my mouth is stopped, or I begin to find excuses for it. So, too, all along the line. Whenever a sin becomes one's own sin, it undergoes a transformation; and, without actually defending it outright, one has so many considerations to urge in extenuation of it, so many explanations to offer, that one succeeds in hiding its true magnitude from oneself and in giving it an entirely different complexion from what it really possesses.

3. So, thirdly, we fail to pass an honest judgment on self, if we accept **a wrong standard of judgment.**

The temptation to such acceptance is very great; and it may arise from one of several causes. There is, first, the fact that forbidden pleasures are sweet, and that we are by nature disinclined to act up to the highest ideal. There is, next, the fact that we do not, as a rule, receive in the world the strongest inducement to practise the highest morality. The tone of general society is not sufficiently high pitched; and, unfortunately, the society that some choose for themselves is anything but elevating. Then, lastly, we are prone, not to measure ourselves by the impartial standard of righteousness, but to "compare ourselves with ourselves" (2 Corinth. x. 12), and, in doing so, not to set virtue against virtue and vice against vice, but to set our own virtues against our neighbour's vices, and thereby to sway the balance in our own favour. Thus we go away self-satisfied and well pleased. That was what the Pharisee in the parable did, when he compared himself with the Publican. Yet, it was the Publican, not the Pharisee, that went down to his house justified (St. Luke xviii. 14).

4. The last obstacle I shall mention in this connexion is **the complexity and subtle character of sin.**

This is an obstacle that much torments the conscientious man. Were sin a simple thing, with its nature always obvious and plain, lying, as it were, exposed on the surface of our being and not penetrating to the centre, then we might easily enough gain a full knowledge of it. But (*a*) its very nature is to be **complex** and to **go down to the centre.** It is a complicated web whose threads interlace and overlap; not one of which can be readily followed out from its origin to its termination, and each of which has the most intricate connexion with all the others. No one sin ever stands alone; and no one sin

but has consequences remote as well as immediate. Then, (*b*) sin has a wonderful **transforming power** about it. The shapes it can assume are countless, and its disguises endless. There is not a vice that cannot, when need is, imitate some virtue; and Satan himself comes transformed as an angel of light. Then, (*c*) sin can **hide** itself, so that even a searching eye may have great difficulty in detecting it. Thus it is that a good man may remain for long in ignorance of its real hold over him. There are points in his character that have been fully tried, and that have stood the trial; but there are other points, it may be, that have not been brought specially under temptation. But temptation comes—perhaps, suddenly or unexpectedly; and he fails, quite to his own surprise. A depth of sin is revealed within him of which before he had no suspicion; and at the revelation he stands aghast.

So much for self-judgment. Pass, next, to

II. Judging others

Our object in judging others ought to be precisely the object we have in view when we judge ourselves,—*viz.*, the good of the person judged, his amendment or reformation. And the spirit in which we judge another should be the very same spirit in which we judge ourselves—a spirit of impartiality or fairness, not exaggerating, not excusing, putting nothing down in malice, passing nothing by through mistaken love or friendship; remembering that "with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 2).

Hence the meaning of our Lord's strong injunction—"judge not that ye be not judged" (St. Matt. vii. 1). That does not forbid our **ever** judging others: it does not unconditionally command us, at no time and under no

circumstances, to condemn a brother's conduct when it is wrong, or commend it when it is right. On the contrary, as explained by Christ Himself, it simply forbids harsh, unjust, uncharitable judging of others—eagerness to find faults in our brother's character, without any corresponding eagerness to discern the faults that may be in our own; the tendency to mete out to him with a measure that we refuse to employ for ourselves; the malicious pleasure of beholding "motes" (splinters) in his eye, without first considering that "beams"—not "splinters" only, but whole "logs" of wood—may be in our own eyes. It is not the **fact** of judging that our Lord condemns, but a certain **manner** of judging,—*viz.*, judging on the principle of doing unto others as we would **not** that they should do unto us.

This being so, let us consider the obstacles to correct judging of others.

1. The first that may be mentioned is the temptation to judge **superficially**.

This is a consequence of the necessity that, in dealing with others, we must approach them from without. View the window of a cathedral from the outside, and it appears a mere daub—a confused and unintelligible blur, not even attractive. But enter the cathedral door, and look at the window from within, and it is seen to be a magnificent picture, richly coloured and beautifully designed. So, view a man's character simply from without, and, though it have in reality fine traits in it, it may seem only blurred and uninviting—all the more so, if there be indeed flaws and dark spots in it. Hence the difficulty of properly judging—say, David, the king. A portion of his character was unmistakably fine and noble: grand and chivalrous qualities (as manifested, for example, in his conduct towards Saul) were his. **That** is univers-

ally admitted. But a portion of it also—as shown, for instance, in the treatment of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel xi.)—was very far from perfect, so that people have often found it hard to understand how David should have been "a man after God's own heart." But see him in his moments of penitence and deep contrition, see him as he recovers from his falls, and then the real man is disclosed. What are the principles dearest to his heart; and how does he feel towards himself when he has come short of them or disgraced them? In the answer to that, we find the point that determines what kind of man he was. So, too, with others. If we are to judge any one correctly, we must go beyond the inconsistencies and imperfections of his practice to his principles: **we must take him at his best, not at his worst**—must try to appreciate his strength, and not confine ourselves to his weaknesses. The guiding maxim is "judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (St. John vii. 24)—a maxim that comes home to us with all the greater force when we remember how ignorant we are, and necessarily must be, of the temptations withstood by another. The Scottish bard[1] has put it in well-known words:—

What's *done* we partly may compute
But know not what's *resisted.*

"It is no great thing to be easy-tempered, if God made us so. It *is* a great thing, by the grace of God, to subdue a quick, angry temper, if it be the trial which God appointed us. And what knowest thou of the hidden graces of others? or with what toil, by God's grace, they gained what to thee seems so imperfect?"

2. A second obstacle is **want of sympathy.**

It is never easy for us to place ourselves in the exact position of another, to take home to ourselves his

[1] Burns, "Address to the Unco Guid."

circumstances, to realize the full force of the temptations to which he is exposed. Many things lie in the way of this. (*a*) In the first place, another's temperament may be quite different from ours; and so, what proves a temptation to him may be none to us. St. Peter, for example, with his fiery impulsive disposition, found occasions for falling where a disciple with a less impulsive, more unimpassioned, nature would have been entirely safe. (*b*) In the next place, the experiences of each of us, however numerous they may be, are yet limited. There are points in our own character that have not yet been tested. And so we do not know, with regard to them, the real power of a temptation on ourselves. How, then, can we duly estimate its power on others? (*c*) Once more, there are particular sins that are specially hateful to us—they shock or they disgust us; but, when shocked or disgusted, we are scarcely in a fit position to deal fairly with him who succumbs to them.

Hence, the results are often lamentable. From want of sympathy, we pass severer judgments on an offender than are really deserved: **his** sins are not **ours**—not those to which we feel any special inclination; therefore, we deal unsparingly with them. Therein, we transgress the apostolic injunction,—"Even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). From want of sympathy, we grow intolerant and impatient—ready to condemn an opponent simply because he is an opponent, and to accuse him of all kinds of misdeeds simply because we cannot occupy his standpoint and he does not see with our eyes. In order to be just in judging, a man must, above all things, be sympathetic; "bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things" (1 Corinth. xiii. 7).

3. Next may be noticed **self-partiality.**

What a blinding power this may be in **self**-judgment, we have already seen—how it has a tendency to change the whole character of sin in one's eyes, to tone it down, to make it appear less base or less sinful than it really is. The mere fact that it is I myself that have fallen into it or that harbour it, sets me upon glossing it over and finding excuses for it.

Now, exactly opposite is the result of this same self-partiality when, not oneself, but others are the object of our judgment,—provided, that is, that those others do not stand to us in some near relationship, such as that of kindred or friends (a case to be considered presently).

There can be no question that people take a malicious delight in finding out the faults and shortcomings of others and in detracting from their virtues. Thus are they able to raise themselves somewhat in their own estimation. It is always consoling to us that others are fallible and erring as well as we; and, when high-toned people are seen to have their weaknesses, they cease to be quite the rebuke to us that otherwise they might have been.

But, be this as it may, another fact is unquestionable, —namely, that, when self-partiality intervenes, jealousy and envy are sure to intervene too; and, when possessed by jealousy or envy, people begin to look upon others as enemies or rivals—personal opponents, whose very existence is distasteful to them, whose merits are a standing offence to them, whose success interferes with their plans or humbles their self-conceit, so that it becomes very difficult to be either just or generous towards them. By the jealous man, the faults of a rival are all exaggerated, and his meritorious acts depreciated. With a jaundiced eye, it is impossible to judge correctly; and the attempt is rarely made.

4. A fourth perverting influence is **personal attachment.**

This refers only to a limited class of persons: it refers to the judgments that we are called upon to pass on the conduct of those specially dear to ourselves, or those whom we specially admire—relatives, for instance, fellow-citizens, friends.

This is otherwise denominated "love for others."

Now, "love for others" is certainly a very right and very noble thing; but it is, unquestionably, accompanied with a special danger. It may very readily be turned from **love** for others into **partiality** for others; and quite intelligibly so. For, relatives and friends, and, frequently, fellow-citizens and neighbours, are to us **a second self**; and so the partiality that I am prone to show towards myself I am willing also to extend to them. The very fact that they occupy a special place in my affections is apt to blind me to their faults; and, if it does not wholly prevent me from perceiving their failings, it prompts me to find excuses for them, or to make as little of them as possible, while, at the same time, it leads me to overestimate their virtues.

The difficulty is certainly not lessened by the fact that, towards our friends, we have to act the **chivalrous**, as well as the loving, part. A man is scarcely worthy of the name of a man, if he be not prepared to "stand by" his friend. Yet, "standing by" one's friend may sometimes be only another name for defending his wrong-doing or glossing over his sins; and mistaken friendship may mean a permanent injury, of an unintentional, yet deeply deplorable, kind.

5. An obstacle of an opposite kind is **prejudice**: by which is meant, unreasoning adherence to a conviction or an opinion hastily formed or accepted simply on the authority of others.

The causes of prejudice are innumerable — early training, the likes or dislikes of those we love, family-preferences, party traditions, and so forth. But, from whatever cause it may arise, it is always an influence distorting our conception of right, and leading us to false and often very unjust judgments. It is, moreover, a great means of narrowing our sympathy; and so breeds bigotry and uncharitableness. Once prejudice me against a man, and I refuse to see in him much good, to allow him merit, or to accord him hearty praise. Once prejudice me in a man's favour, and I am prepared to find in him only what is good, and to estimate his merits far above their desert. So with a cause or with a party. How few people can be entirely just to those who are opposed to them in politics or in religion! How few are fully alive to the shortcomings of the body or denomination to which themselves belong!

6. Similarly with the last obstacle to be mentioned,—namely, **passion.**

A man carried away by a frenzy can see no merit, except in fanatics like himself. Being in an extreme, he has no patience with those who are not in the extreme too; and he has only condemnation for the cool and calm and unimpassioned. Vehemence must needs be intolerant—even though it arise from the mere passion of anger. Anger agitates the mind and disturbs the nerves; and, consequently, renders calm judgment impossible.

CHAPTER XIV

THE POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

Nature of the Christian ideal—Whence its regenerating and transforming power—1. It is an idea—Examples of influence of ideas in producing great results in the world—2. It is also an ideal—Meaning of this—Three characteristics—What all is implied in these three characteristics — Examples of ideals from non-Christian religions and also from non-religious sources—How these fail—Wherein Christianity is superior—The Christian raised by the ideal into the region of love and of spontaneous willing service—3. It centres in the living Christ — Ideals as bare abstractions — The Christian ideal marks off Christianity from philosophical morality—Christ on the distinction between duty and loving personal obedience—Faith and the grain of mustard seed—Progress in character thus assured—4. It is a social ideal—Christianity carried into every-day life—Example of Christ—Contrast with John the Baptist — Both the spirit of the Christian and his ideal different from the Baptist's—Hence, "he that is but little in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

WHAT the Christian Ideal itself is, needs hardly to be stated, after all that has been said in previous chapters. It is seen in the life and character of Jesus, as portrayed to us in the Gospels, and interpreted by the New Testament writers — absolute purity realized under human conditions by Him who was the perfect man, filial intercourse and communion with the Father, intense and unremitting, never-failing, obedience, and unqualified sub-

mission to the Divine Will, ungrudging devotion to the highest interests of mankind. And this ideal, manifested to us by Him who is the Head of Humanity, works in those who accept it by transforming them into the likeness of Christ, their Master, and, therefore, into the likeness of God—for, Christ is "the image"[1] of God and the revealer of His character.[2]

The Christian Ideal, then, has power to regenerate and transform those who accept it. Whence comes this regenerative power? That is the question which we must now answer with some minuteness.

1. And, first of all, it is the power of **an idea.**

Now, how great a power an idea is, one may see on all hands in the world. It is an idea, for example, laying hold of heaven-inspired men, that has produced our reformations, our missionary enterprises, our humane and charitable projects, our philanthropic movements, and the like. It is an idea that actuates and sways the statesman, supporting him in the midst of obstacles and thwartings, and enabling him to turn failure into victory. This explains to us his willingness to live laborious days and to spend his energies in the service of a cause or of a party. Through the influence of an idea, men have been known to give over comfort, wealth, position, and to court hardship, peril, toil; and, through the influence of an idea, as through the influence of faith, kingdoms have been subdued, righteousness has been wrought, promises have been obtained, and strength has been perfected in weakness. Again, it is the power of an idea that begets in men that sympathy with the lower animals and with the weak and the oppressed of mankind which prevents cruelty and calls forth help. Yea, and ideas of

[1] See Colossians i. 15; also, Hebrews i. 3.

[2] See St. John i. 18; xiv. 9, 10.

the grosser kind are sometimes no less powerful than those of the higher order. All ruling passion is of the nature of an idea: and, if men have been stimulated to great things by a noble pride or by a glorious ambition —by the desire, for instance, to benefit and bless the race,—others have been goaded on to enormous exertions in the pursuit of what is base and evil. Selfishness, aggrandisement, love of power, or love of money,—each of these has proved a motive influence productive of the worst results; and who shall calculate the mischief that has been done in the attempt to gratify the lower nature?

In like manner, an idea actuates and rules the Christian. He is, in the truest sense of all, a man "possessed"—laid hold of by a grand conception; and his main endeavour is to body forth this conception, to work up to it and reproduce it in his life: and, if he may not entirely achieve the feat here, he looks forward hopefully to the future, where full attainment awaits him.

2. Hence, secondly, the Christian Idea is **also an ideal,**—and an ideal of the most fascinating kind.

By this is meant—(1) first, that likeness to God (as Christ revealed it) is, on the side of character, the highest thing conceivable by us, and the highest thing desirable. There is nothing greater that the mind can picture, nothing better that the heart can wish. Then (2), next, is meant that the Christian Ideal is one that grows in richness of content, the more we guide our conduct by it and the nearer we attain to it. Both our hold of it and our knowledge of it increase with experience. Then (3), lastly, it is an ideal for which we have the highest evidence that it is actually attainable, and will one day be reached by us. Christ Himself reached it; and He has given us the pledge and the assurance that, through His being in them, His followers shall reach it too.

Now, note what is implied in these three characteristics. Men in all ages and in every country have, according to their capacity, formed ideals, and by ideals have been moved. The Mohammedan's ideal is a never-ending future of intense pleasure—mixed, indeed, with higher elements, but with the voluptuous and the luxurious conspicuous. The highest aspiration of the Brahman is a coming time when he shall be absorbed into the Deity or Universal Spirit, part of whom, or (more properly) part of which, he conceives himself to be, and yet, when absorbed, shall lose all consciousness and individuality—all that, according to Western notions, makes existence possible, or, at any rate, that makes it worth the having. Again, the highest hope of the Buddhist is absolute annihilation—to have done with life in all its forms and aspects, and to be as though he had not been. And many persons in Christendom, rejecting Christianity and all that is distinctive in it—rejecting, therefore, Christ's claims and the doctrine of immortality,—try to form ideals of a perfect state on earth with the supernatural eliminated: some regarding it as the reign of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity"; others, conceiving it as the supremacy of science, the sovereignty of knowledge measured by utility; others still, looking forward to a golden age when mankind shall be ruled by contemplation—to a coming era when philosophy shall hold the reins, and princes, kings, and subjects shall alike avow its sway.[1]

These are some of the world's ideals: of which it may at once be said that, whatever be their recommendations and whatever their virtue, there is no reason to believe that any one of them will ever be realized. On the contrary, there is strong reason to believe the opposite. They either err by transgressing fundamental laws of

[1] Plato's vision also.

righteousness and justice, or they proceed upon a partial view of human needs and a mistaken notion of human nature and of man's destiny and place in the universe And, although they do, no doubt, exercise an influence on those that entertain them, and lead to much activity in the endeavour to embody them in fact, they fail in not having the properties that are requisite for commanding a general acceptance, or for ensuring ultimate and abiding success. In this respect, the Christian ideal has the superiority. Not only is it attainable, it is all on the lines of righteousness and of man's highest spiritual progress. And this fact, combined with the circumstance that it is wholly fitted to meet the natural aspirations and desires of the human heart, gives it a unique position; making it an effective inspiration, as well as an ideal. As it is not something alien to us or imposed upon us from without, it possesses power to move and mould the human will: it is human nature in its highest form appealing to imperfect human nature and drawing it to itself, and, in drawing, purifying it. Hence, it works by love, not by coercion or constraint. External law commands, and, in case of disobedience, enforces its commands by pains and penalties. The Christian ideal, on the other hand, inspires and touches the springs of obedience from within. Consequently, the Beatitudes that Jesus pronounced upon the willing subjects of the new kingdom, which He Himself came to found, are not, like the Ten Words of Moses, injunctions or commandments. It is not said, "Thou shalt not be of a self-sufficient spirit," "thou shalt not be high-minded," "thou shalt not be impure in heart," "thou shalt not be a peace-breaker"; nor even (positively), "Thou shalt be poor in spirit," "thou shalt be meek," "thou shalt be pure in heart," "thou shalt be a peace-maker"; but "**Blessed** are the poor in spirit," "**blessed** are the meek," "**blessed** are the pure in heart,"

"**blessed** are the peacemakers." We are moving here in the sphere of love, and, so, of blessedness—in the higher region of cheerful and spontaneous service, where is the liberty of the sons of God.

3. Hence the third feature of the Christian Ideal—**it centres in the living Christ Himself**: "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (St. John i. 14).

Many ideals assume the form of dry, bare, abstractions—the reign of justice, for example, love of humanity, the rights of man, and so forth. But few people can grasp dry, bare, abstractions. Justice, humanity, rights of man are nothing unless we particularize them and embody them: only thus do they fire the imagination and create a well-sustained enthusiasm. What people need, in the last resort, is some living being whom they can love. It is only to a person we can cling "with the heart, and with the soul, and with the mind, and with the strength."

Now, here precisely it is where Christianity is marked off from philosophical morality. Those high conceptions of duty and virtue that the moralist deals with are, in **his** hands, simply abstractions: hence their practical impotence. They fail because they are not, as the great apostle of culture reminds us, "touched with emotion."[1] They are not, and cannot be, touched with emotion, so long as they are kept, as the moralist keeps them, as abstractions. But the Christian righteousness is not a mere abstraction: it is an ideal that has come to us embodied in the Saviour, shown us as lived in a great Example. Hence the efficacy of its inspiring power. Like the pillar of fire in the wilderness, it beckons onwards; but, by its presence also, it arouses

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma.*

courage and imparts strength. By its surpassing grandeur and sublimity, it captivates and stirs us; by its practicability, it cheers us. Unlike the moralist's duty, it is more than the mere fulfilment of a law: a law, as Kant says, "constrains us to something not voluntarily done." It transports us to a higher sphere, to the sphere of faith and love—a sphere where the notions "law," "command," "duty," are not so much inadequate as irrelevant, a sphere in which (as I have just said) we move with the liberty of the sons of God. Of bare morality, Christ Himself says, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done those things which are commanded you, say, We are **unprofitable** servants: we have done that which was our **duty** to do" (St. Luke xvii. 10). But, of faith and love He says (and says it in the very same passage, obviously pointing the contrast), "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (St. Luke xvii. 6). As is the tiny mustard seed, with the principle of life wrapped up within it, so is the Christian enlivened by faith. It is through the principle of life wrapped up within it that the mustard seed, when buried in the earth, is able to push aside or circumvent all obstacles,—the soil that covers it, the stones that happen to stand in its way, the tree-roots that envelop it, the untoward circumstance of its being sown (as seeds so frequently are) with the budding-point downwards,—and to reach the light and upper air, and thereafter to grow continuously, until it becomes a great tree, and the fowls of the air come and lodge in the branches of it. It is through the principle of faith, small at first, it may be, as the tiny mustard seed, that the Christian is enabled to do great things. Yea, this is the power that enables him at last to remove from his soul the sycamine

tree of sin, even though its roots may have entwined themselves around his being and penetrated his heart. Little by little, yet steadily, like the mustard's growth, he advances in holiness, until at last he reaches "the **perfect** man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

It is all done through the power of the ideal, issuing from Christ, in accordance with the Scripture doctrine, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, **we shall be like Him**; for, we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

4. Lastly, the Christian ideal is **social**: it is truly human, and has reference to men's actual lives in the world and to their deepest social needs.

In endeavouring to realize the ideal in himself, the Christian does so in the world, in society, in the midst of and along with his fellow-men. The ancient Greek philosopher stood apart from his fellow-men. He was one of a select few; but humanity in general went its own way, independent of, and uninfluenced by, him. But Christ lived in the world, and thereby carried the ideal into practice. He was the embodiment of perfect holiness and grace; but these were exhibited in the very midst of men, in the heart of their busy everyday life—at Nazareth, at Capernaum, at Jericho, at Nain, in Jerusalem: **there** where human beings toiled and struggled, where suffering prevailed, where sin abounded and hid the light, where feebleness and faults were more conspicuous than victory and strength. He companied with sinners, He taught the publicans and harlots, He shrank not from contact with the lapsed, He raised the Magdalene, He treated tenderly the woman taken in adultery; He had a large and human heart, going out in sympathy to every one who was labouring and heavy-

laden. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind—those were His special care; and, as He journeyed from place to place, the outcast and the humble flocked around Him, the distressed and the oppressed cried aloud for help. The motto of His life was, "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (St. Luke v. 32). And, in the world, too, the life of His disciples is required to be led.

Hence the difference between the very humblest Christian and the greatest pagan sage, or between the humblest Christian and such a saintly character as John the Baptist. When Jesus said of John, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (St. Matt. xi. 11), He doubtless referred, (*a*) to the different **tempers** of the Christian and the Baptist, and (*b*) to the different **ideals** whereby the two were guided. The temper of the Baptist was that of Elijah of old: it was stern and unsympathetic with erring humanity, ready to call down fire from heaven upon the rebellious and impenitent; for, John came in the spirit of Elijah, and, like the Tishbite, was most at home in denouncing sin and in warning men "to flee from the wrath to come." Again, he came with the ideal of Elijah. The highest religious life according to both was that of the hermit—aloofness from mankind and from the ordinary business and duties of the world. Hence, John lived in the desert, and came forth in public only when he had a special message to deliver. Furthermore, he practised austerities, and taught his disciples to do the same. His ideal of righteousness was self-mortification, quiet spiritual meditation, and solitary communing with God; and he is the last man that we should expect to find at a

marriage feast turning water into wine, or even to meet at the dinner-table (say) of Matthew the publican or of Simon the leper. Locusts and wild honey were enough for him; and his drink was water from the brook.[1]

Now, Jesus' temper and Jesus' ideal were entirely different. On the one hand, the central teaching of the Saviour was, not the **wrath** of God, but God's **love**; and the spirit that He imparted to His followers was the spirit of meekness, of mutual forbearance and forgiveness, and of brotherly affection. Not through harshness, but through kindness, did He win men from their sins; and not otherwise did He enjoin His disciples. "Go your way and tell John," He said, "the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them" (St. Matt. xi. 4, 5). On the other hand, the ideal life to Him was social, not ascetic. Instead of eschewing men, He delighted to mix with them; and His great endeavour was, to get them to bring religion into the world with them, and, through it, to hallow and sanctify their everyday duties. Not **out of**, but **in**, the world, He said, is man's proper place; and the real power of godliness should be shown in battling with and overcoming the common temptations of life, and in producing joy in the heart, while a man is going about faithfully discharging his appointed task. He countenanced sociality in every innocent form, and thereby He drew men of all classes around Him. His enemies even said, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. xi. 19).

[1] See St. Matthew iii., and the corresponding passages in St. Mark and St. Luke. See, also, St. Matt. xi. 2-19.

Thus again does the Christian ideal prove its superior efficacy. It regenerates society, and it regenerates the individual as a social being; for, as Christ Himself lived in the world, mingling with men and entering into all their experiences, He realized the social ideal in His own person and thereby stimulates and strengthens others to follow His example. There is certainly need, in the Christian's life, for times of solitary retirement and secret communing with the Father on the mountain apart or in the desert; but it is only in order to brace him for facing the world and for discharging efficiently his social duties and functions. Ethical religion must be carried into the work-a-day world, if it is really to fulfil its object; and, if the beauty of holiness is, indeed, to attain its highest splendour, it must be displayed in active ministration and in the conscientious performance of humble offices among men.

SECTION E

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL

True

CHAPTER XV

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM

I. Two views of life: the optimistic and the pessimistic—Christian view optimistic—II. Problem of evil (physical, mental, and moral) stated—Certain portions of the facts of experience find their explanation in science; others are dealt with by philosophy—Pain and moral evil in connexion with man, is what Christian ethics considers—III. The Christian interpretation of the phenomena—1. Physical pain and mental pain strengthen and elaborate character, and are, therefore, blessings in disguise—Jesus' example—Job's difficulties—Pains of remorse salutary—2. Nature of moral evil—Arises neither from ignorance nor from connexion of the soul with the body, but in man's free will: it is sin—3. Sin is already conquered—God's overruling providence—All things tending to fulfil His end or purpose—What this end or purpose is, and what are the means of its accomplishment—Lines of proof that the means are adequate—(1) Christianity has been a great regenerative power in the earth—(2) Its dealing with specific kinds of sin, and with sin as a mass—(3) The moral trend or tendency of modern civilization—4. The present life must be taken in connexion with the future, if its true significance is to be seen—IV. Summary of the Christian position—Life is worth living.

I

MAN is a being of moods. From varying physical health, from changing fortune, and from one or more of

a thousand other causes, he may take to-day a view of the world widely different from what he took yesterday. Yet, he is also, in measure, a creature of circumstances. Inherited susceptibilities and dispositions, natural and social surroundings, acquired habits, all tell upon him and tend to shape his conception of life and to stereotype his attitude towards the world and existence. Nevertheless, he is an active and progressive being, not plastic only but endowed with force of will and moved by his knowledge, his aspirations, and his beliefs. Not experience alone—if by experience be meant actual attainment and possession—moulds his character and fixes his views, but all that he has it in him to become—the ideal no less than the real, the probable as well as the certain and assured. And, indeed, it is very much the proportion that these two—the real and the ideal, fact and aspiration—bear to each other that marks off one individual from another and determines whether a man shall be an optimist or a pessimist,—shall take a bright and encouraging view of life or a sombre and depressing one. Given experience and the bare facts of life, without much susceptibility to the ideality that is in them and the end that they tend to accomplish, and you have given an incipient pessimist. Given a man of progressive nature, of aspiration and of hope, and you have given the incipient optimist. The optimistic temperament is essentially cheerful and sanguine, but it is also morally courageous: it faces boldly the sufferings and hardships that fall to one's lot, and thrives under them. The pessimistic temperament is not only ungenial but is also, in all likelihood, founded on a certain want of physical robustness, and is deficient in manly, if not also in intellectual, fibre. Hence, the pessimist is very much what the world has made him; and his complaint is as to the way in which the world uses him: circum-

stances and his lot determine his position. The optimist is not thus the creature of circumstances and his lot; nor is his concern so much with how the world uses him as with how he himself may be able to use the world. His reaction upon his environment is far more active, far more energetic, than the pessimist's: he is the master of circumstances, not their slave, and, even when he bows to them, he bends them.

From this it follows that a man's conception of life is conditioned by his own efforts to achieve life; and the position he ultimately assumes is determined more by his character than by his intellect.

Nevertheless, intellectual considerations enter into the matter; and it is the great endeavour of the intelligent optimist and of the intelligent pessimist alike to find a rational basis for his creed. By reason, the one undertakes to justify the ways of God to man; and by that same reason, the other essays to prove that there are no ways of God to justify, while life itself is unmeaning and irrational.

Needless to say, of these two views of life — the optimistic and the pessimistic, — **Christianity attaches itself to the former.**

This was, so far, a heritage from the Jewish religion. As the Jews were directly under the government of God —as they were "a peculiar people," a "royal priesthood," selected from the nations of the earth for a definite purpose,—they conceived themselves as special objects of the Divine care. God was, in a distinctive sense, their God and Protector. Hence, they were hopeful and brave, and could not, even in moments of the darkest national calamity, look upon life as a failure. Their government was, in its origin, a theocracy—*i.e.*, God was its king and head, and, till the time of Saul, its

sole king and head. But, even in the purest theocratic times, their view of God's sovereignty was confined to the present life: they had no definite revelation of a future state, and of all that that implies. And so their optimism was necessarily different from the Christian's. Christianity, looking forward, as well as backward and around, is of necessity more luminous and more hopeful than Judaism. It differs, also, from ancient Greek philosophy —which, although it had visions of the future, of a coming golden age, was, nevertheless, narrow and unreal. Its visions were simply dreams, and, not having sufficient warrant in reality, could not prevent men from falling into hopelessness and despair. But Christianity, being, as it is, a gospel of good cheer, bringing hope and trust to man, is, in its very nature, opposed to every gospel of hopelessness and despair; and, when confronted with the mentally and morally disturbing fact of the existence and prevalence of evil in the world—the one fact, above all others, that seems to lend itself to the pessimist, and to render his position impregnable,—it is ready with its explanation, and is not afraid of the issue.

II

The problem of Evil is this—

Pain *is*, and sin *is*: the world is full of suffering and anguish, physical and mental, as well as moral. There are destructive forces around us on every side. Nature, with its earthquakes, its volcanoes, its hurricanes, and the like, is inexorable and relentless, and seems to work in utter disregard of the interests of sentient and rational beings. Herbs and plants are not all wholesome and harmless. While some are health-giving and nutritious, others are poisonous and deadly. Among the

lower animals, a state of constant warfare is going on; one creature preying upon another, ever ready to capture and destroy, and, in killing, oftentimes inflicting excruciating pain. When we reach man, a more appalling phenomenon appears. Moral corruption now comes in, and we have to face the fact of malignity and ill-will, of man's inhumanity to man, leading to cruelty, oppression, and deliberate injustice.

Moreover, when righteousness occurs, it seems often unrewarded; while vice, not only goes unpunished, but is frequently the condition of prosperity and fortune. "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Ecclesiastes ix. 11).

Now, if all this be so (and who shall deny it?), the problem is, How can we believe that God exists, or, if He exists, cares for and rules the world? If He exists, either He has love for man and would save him if He could, but He cannot; or else, He is regardless of man, and has left him to the play and cruel mercies of blind natural forces.

That seems to be the unpleasant and startling alternative. **How does Christianity meet it?**

So far as concerns certain portions of the facts, Christianity has nothing special to say. Their bearing is not so much religious as philosophical and scientific; and, so, philosophy and science must deal with them. Thus, as to the destructive forces of Nature—volcanoes, earthquakes, etc.,—it is for physics to show that a material structure like the earth, part of a vast material system, subject to mechanical law, necessarily involves the existence of such terrific phenomena. And this, physics does

show. What breathing and the circulation of the blood are to man, that volcanoes and the like are to the earth (so says Natural Science): they are necessities, from the very nature of the case—the earth could not continue in being without them. Hence, the inference is easy that the destruction (say, to human and animal life) that frequently accompanies them is only a consequence of the existence of the earth **as an earth** and as **a fit habitation** for man and other sentient creatures. We must not forget that, though the earth is a home suitable for man, it is not an isolated thing, serving this purpose only. It is **part of a world-system**, and so cannot be absolutely perfect in one sole respect,—*viz.*, as a home for sentient beings. Enough if it is a **suitable** home—not to say the most perfect home that is possible, **under the circumstances.**

Again, some plants are wholesome and others poisonous; but that is no argument against the Divine power and goodness. Even poisonous plants are medicinally valuable, and man has skill to use them. If poisonous plants have a necessary place in the economy of Nature, man, if he is to partake of Nature, must submit to the conditions. It is unreasonable to require that everything on the earth shall exist for **his** pleasure and satisfaction. If he be a **sharer** in the good things of life, he can claim no more.

Nor even does the existence of so-called pests,—the noxious animals (serpents, etc.),—and the cruelty and rapacity of the lower animals, and the tortures they inflict on each other, really impugn the Divine righteousness. The term "pests" is here wrongly applied. It has no meaning except as **relative to us**. Nothing can, strictly speaking, be denominated a pest that is discharging its legitimate function in nature, or occupying its own place in existence. So, too, "tortures" is a

relative term. What would be tortures to self-conscious and reflective beings need not be such—at all events, to anything like the same extent—to the lower animals. But, even in the case of tortures—which are only pain in an extreme form,—there is nothing reprehensible in the infliction of pain, except it be done by conscious **persons**, with the mere malignant purpose of deriving pleasure from it. But malignity has no place in the case of the lower animals;[1] personality being here wanting. Only **spiritual** beings can manifest malevolence, and so can inflict torture that is reprehensible and abhorrent.

Where the real pinch comes in, then, is when we reach man—man with his self-consciousness and his free will, with his exalted place in the Universe, and yet with his corrupted nature and his distorted judgments. And it is here that Christianity has its special message.

III

What, then, does Christianity here say?

It neither denies nor minimizes the hard and harsh facts of life—it fully admits them; but it emphatically denies that they prove anything against the goodness and the power of God: on the contrary, when properly understood, they disclose both His goodness and His power, and reveal His wisdom.—For,

1. First, **as to physical pain and mental suffering.** This so far as human beings are concerned, is a blessing in disguise. It serves to strengthen and develop character; giving rise to patience, drawing forth heroism, demanding hope, and teaching submission. "And not only so," says St. Paul, "but let us also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation; and probation, hope: and hope putteth not to shame" (Romans v. 3-5).

[1] The case of a cat playing with a mouse, is no real exception.

See what sufferings did for Jesus Christ Himself. The Temptation in the wilderness, the fierce opposition and bitter persecution of the Scribes and Pharisees on many an occasion, the Garden of Gethsemane, with its agony and bloody sweat, the trials before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate, the Passion on the Cross—all went to the perfecting of His life, as they all tested His spiritual strength. Suffering is the school of obedience, and it wrought obedience in Him, "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising shame" (Hebrews xii. 2); and what was the result? The writer of *Hebrews* expresses it in a single sentence: "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and **having been made perfect**, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation" (v. 8, 9).

It is the same with human souls in general. Suffering is designed to perfect character. Only through conflict and endurance can spiritual eminence and true nobility be gained. So that pain and hardships are not an evil, but ministers of good: they are tokens of the Father's love—"for, whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews xii. 6).

Hence, we see, prosperity is no sure sign of righteousness or proof of the divine favour, nor is adversity the inevitable reward of ill-doing and a proof of the divine displeasure. The problem that vexed Job,—*viz.*, how the wicked should have peace and good fortune attending them in this life, while the godly are in affliction and trouble,—so far finds its solution in the true purpose of pain. "And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man

sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (St. John ix. 1-3).[1] Pain is **disciplinary**: it has power to educate and train in righteousness, to confirm faith, to elicit meekness and submission, and to draw the sufferer nearer God. Hence the value of persecution. It establishes principle, and deepens love and devotion to God.

But pain is also **reformatory**. When it is the consequence of sin, it leads (or is designed to lead) to repentance and amendment of life. Even the pangs and terrors of Remorse are a minister of good; checking, it may be, a sinful tendency at the beginning and preventing its leading to a disastrous result, or arousing the conscience to activity when it has grown lethargic and danger is at hand.

So far, then, is it from proving a lack of power in God that pain and suffering should be allowed to continue in the world, that the existence of pain and suffering, under present circumstances, is the proof of His love and goodness. Remove pain and suffering, and how could human character be formed?

2. But, secondly, **moral evil**—what is it? It is something, says Christian ethics, that originates with man. It is more than ignorance—more than a mere lack of knowledge or insight; and it does not, as many of the Greek philosophers maintained, arise from the soul's contact with the body—as if matter were, in its very nature, impure, and connexion with it a disaster.[2]

[1] See, also, St. Luke xiii. 1-5.

[2] This was Plato's view, in the *Timaeus*, although there alone of all his Dialogues; but it was the common view of his successors, the Neo-Platonists. Indeed, so far did Plotinus carry his contempt for the body that he refused to allow his picture to be taken, lest there should be handed down to posterity the semblance of that which he so much despised. He also refused to speak of his birthplace or of his birth; regarding his sojourn in the body, with all its accompaniments, as a necessity to be deplored—a kind of disgrace, a curse, something to be

There is no necessary relation of lack of knowledge to immorality: ignorance is merely the mark of a finite mind. And the body and matter, as much as the soul, are creatures of God, and so cannot be in themselves "vile." Christ's Incarnation has consecrated the body, and given us the proper view of it. Moral evil is deeper than either—deeper than ignorance, deeper than the soul's connexion with the body. It is a breach of the divine law by man, **in the exercise of his free will**—conscious and deliberate rebellion against light and against goodness. It lies in the human will, and so cannot be removed by any force apart from the will. External power can do nothing here. A human will, from the very nature of the case, cannot be **coerced**: it must be won by **persuasion**—by the gentle drawings of love,—or else, not at all.

3. Hence, thirdly, sin may be conquered: yea, when it first emerged in the world, it came **as already conquered**. It is the very clear and consistent teaching of the New Testament that the world is under the Supreme Love and Wisdom—that the order of the universe is a moral order, and that mundane events are working out a Divine plan. All that happens has been foreseen and provided for beforehand. There is no such thing as chance, nor any such thing as fatalism. What obtains is evolution of the Divine purpose in history, under the

ashamed of. Strict asceticism was the logical consequence of this doctrine; and he practised it. Browning's view, in his *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, is much juster:—

> To man, propose this test—
> Thy body at its best,
> How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?
> . . . .
> Let us not always say
> "Spite of this flesh to-day,
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry, "All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul."

conditions of time. God is guiding all, slowly but surely, to an end—an end kept in view from the very beginning, and which nothing can eventually frustrate. With the advent of sin came also the remedy. Christ's redemptive work is, everywhere in Scripture, set forth as no second thought, or after-thought, but as planned "in the counsels of eternity." God is **Providence**—foreseeing the end and appointing the means for its accomplishment; overruling all and guiding all, caring for the individual as well as for the race, for the part as for the whole, and making even "the wrath of man" praise Him (Ps. lxxvi. 10).

What, then, is the end, and what the means? and is the one adequate to the accomplishment of the other?

The end is the destruction of sin, and, with sin, death; and the means is the redeeming work of Jesus, such as we know it in the New Testament and find it in our own experience. Details here are unnecessary: the Christian, familiar with his Bible, is familiar with them. But has the redemptive work succeeded? That is a question eagerly put by many at the present day; and it needs to be answered. The full answer would demand a vast amassing and sifting of facts, which cannot here and now be attempted. But a general indication of the lines on which the answer proceeds may, appropriately enough, be given.

(1) First of all, then, it is a fact that Christianity has been a great regenerative power on the earth—quickening men's spiritual natures, purifying their lives, and aiding in the march of civilization and light. History is full of examples of individuals who own its transforming energy; and, if we wish to see it working on the larger scale, we have only to compare Greek and Roman life as it was in the days of Christ and His apostles, as portrayed to us in profane history as well as in

[illegible] modern life [illegible] difference. Sin [illegible] abundance; [illegible] due to [illegible] Christianity [illegible] that may [illegible] Christianity, [illegible] influence [illegible]

[illegible] Christianity, if [illegible] have put an [illegible] Its value [illegible] has not yet [illegible] the promise and [illegible] opposing [illegible] removed. [illegible] reached the [illegible] inhabitants [illegible] not drive [illegible] in one year . . . By little and little [illegible] (Exodus xxiii. 30).[1] [illegible] because the Lord's [illegible] because [illegible] Israel's good. [illegible] Underlying [illegible] meaning, and it is [illegible] highest good. [illegible] Christianity, if we [illegible] direction of holiness [illegible] Satan's strongholds, even [illegible] say that holiness is as [illegible] Satan's strongholds are [illegible]

[illegible] Which kind of sin is it that

[1] [illegible] 2 and 22.

Christianity has shown itself powerless to cope with? In the days of Christ Himself and of the early disciples, it was confronted with heathenism of the basest and most degrading form. There are no more revolting pictures of sinful and corrupt nature than those presented to us in the Epistles of St. Paul,—where we are shown men revelling in impurity at Corinth and Ephesus and Rome, and demonstrating, in an appalling fashion, what it is to be "without God" in the world. And yet the grossest heathen vices, Christianity by and by overmastered; and, in the reformed lives of many converted heathen, as shown in those same epistles, we can obtain some idea of its real power—a force effectual and transforming, "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah iv. 6). Then, again, within the pages of the New Testament, we have examples of men given over to sins of the more subtle and refined kind—covetousness, ambition, and the like; and there, too, we have examples of men so held, turned, through the power of Jesus' Gospel, to a nobler ambition and to higher pursuits. Then, once more, ordinary experience shows us, in particular cases, the sanctifying virtue of Christian faith—how, when it lays hold of a man, it transforms his character and elevates his aims, and raises the lowest to a higher plane.

And, from what has been already done, we may lawfully infer what is likely to happen in the future. It is not in the nature of a great spiritual force like Christianity to lose its power as time goes on; but, on the contrary, it must, from the nature of the case, gain in intensity. The stone which smote the image, in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (see Daniel ii. 34, 35), had to **grow** before it became a mountain and filled the whole earth; and if we are certain, from the fact that it has been actually found in experience, that there is no **kind** of sin—no species,

form, sort, of it — that Christianity is unable to cope with in individual cases, from the most unsavoury and repulsive to the most subtle and refined, then the presumption is that mere **mass** or **quantity** of sin shall prove no insuperable barrier to its progress, but that that regenerating power which has so far worked to the elevation and cleansing of mankind will continue its operation till righteousness cover the earth, "as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah xi. 9).

(3) Then, thirdly, the moral trend or tendency of modern civilization is certainly in the direction of what Christian ethics dictates. The enthusiasm of humanity is everywhere "in the air." However far men's practice may fall short of their profession, that profession is all on the side of mercy, generosity, humaneness, and the other amiable virtues, and against cruelty, injustice, and oppression. And we can only judge from tendencies and aspirations and from past experience. If the flow has been steadily, on the whole, in one direction, we must believe it will continue in that direction, till we find a reason to the contrary.

Such is the line of answer to the question put; and the result is, that we have good reason to believe that the means is amply adequate to effect the intended purpose.

4. Lastly, Christianity is most emphatic in insisting that we shall not judge the present life by **the present alone**. Through Christ's Resurrection, death is vanquished, and the grave has been shown to be the gateway to eternity. It is St. Paul's triumphant utterance that "Our Saviour Jesus Christ abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy i. 10). There is a hereafter for man, which is in closest connexion with his existence now— the prolongation of it, the completion of it, and, in some sense, the result of it. This has been secured through

the Resurrection and the Ascension Life of Jesus. Life's hardships and injustices must be viewed in the light of a never-ending future—of a world to come, where present injustices shall be redressed and wrongs righted, and where character formed on earth, in weakness and amid vacillations, shall be perfected. Things are moving on to a great consummation, and we are here preparing for it. "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death . . . And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinth. xv. 24-26 and 28).

IV

If now, in the light of this teaching, we put the question, "Is life worth living?" we cannot hesitate as to the answer. To ask the question is to answer it. Life, according to Christianity, is the gift of God; and the pains and sufferings that we have meanwhile to endure are blessings in disguise. Even sin itself, which so harasses and perplexes us, is under God's control: **though prevalent, it is not predominant.** God rules, and all shall be well: yea, all **is** well; for, blessedness is a present possession, no less than a future. Life is worth living; for, men have given to them the power to make it so. It has a serious purpose, which calls forth our highest energies; and the grave is not the end of it. Its true meaning can be seen, and so its value duly appreciated, only in the light of the eternal future. Chastened optimism, therefore, is the reasonable and healthy atti-

tude of the soul; while pessimism is essentially morbid, diseased, unhealthy—a nightmare, begotten of melancholy and fear. To the pessimist, Christianity says, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun" (Ecclesiastes xi. 7): "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Corinth. v. 17): "For, ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans viii. 15); and then, going farther, it lifts the veil and discloses the final glory—the glory of God's accomplished end and purpose—in the vision of "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. xxi. 2). It is the vision of victory completed, when all things are "made new"—of righteousness triumphant, and its dominion supreme: for, "The nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it" (Rev. xxi. 24).

INDEX

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

THE END

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh*

